THE HILL TRIBES OF NORTHERN THAILAND

(A Socio-Ethnological Report)

ILLUSTRATED

BY

GORDON YOUNG
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Young, Gordon, 1927-
The Hill tribes of northern Thailand.


1. Ethnology—Thailand. 2. Thailand—Social life and customs. I. Title. II. Series: Monograph; no. 1.

Reprinted from the edition of 1962, Bangkok, from an original in the collections of the University of Michigan Library. Trim size has been altered. Original trim: 6¾ × 9¾.

MANUFACTURED
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Typical Hilltribe (Meo) Village
OliveR Gordon Young is well qualified to speak with authority about the Thai hill tribes. He was born among them, has lived with them most of his life and probably has more intimate, first-hand knowledge about them than any other living person. He has travelled and hunted through all the northern Thailand country which the hill tribes inhabit, has been on every mountain range and visited every tribe about which he writes.

He knows the Lahu tribe best and speaks their dialect most fluently. In fact, he spoke no other language until after he was seven years old. He is an honorary chieftain of the Lahu tribe. They have conferred upon him the highest of Lahu titles, that of Supreme Hunter, which he earned by fulfilling all of the Lahu requirements.

He was born in 1927 in a Yunnan China mission house which was seven days by mule to the nearest field hospital and 12 days to the nearest road head. Gordon's father, Harold M. Young, was a Baptist missionary and Gordon travelled with him through northern Burma and Thailand as missions were established among the Lahu and Wa tribes. During his childhood he became acquainted with the Wa, Shan, Kachin, Yunnanese, Lahu-shi and Lahu-na tribes and learned enough of the dialect of each to be able to communicate with them. Living with these people he learned a great deal about them and developed a great love of nature and for hunting-training which qualified him as a field collector of animals for museums around the world and as an animal dealer.

Gordon Young is the third generation of Youngs to live and work with the hill tribes. His grandfather, William M. Young arrived in north-east Burma in 1898 to work among the people as a Baptist missionary. He made his first converts among the Shan and Wa people in 1900. Gordon's father, Harold, and his uncle, Vincent, were both born in Kengtung, Burma. His father and uncle, with the help of the Reverend Jim Telford, worked out the Lahu romanized
script about 1925 and some eight years later his uncle did the same thing for the Wa tribe.

Gordon was educated in Burma and India and earned his degree in animal husbandry from California State Polytechnic College. He served two years with the U.S. Seventh Division in Korea. In 1950 he met and married Peggy Karoleski, a California girl. The Youngs live in Chiangmai with their four daughters, all of whom speak Thai fluently. Gordon's father and mother, who are now retired, also live in Chiangmai.

All the material in this report is based on personal observation and knowledge except for an occasional reference which is noted. His lifelong acquaintance with the life and habits of the hill tribe people gives this report a validity which is rare indeed!

Thomas E. Naugarten
Director
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FOREWORD

The purpose of this report is to augment understanding and published information on minority ethnic peoples, more specifically, the hill tribes of northern Thailand. In recent postwar years, there have been significant changes affecting the social, cultural and economic patterns of the hill peoples. New tribes have come, population has increased, villages have moved and relocated in new areas.

Today, twenty tribal subdivisions of mountain people are represented within the northernmost one-fifth of Thailand's geographical boundaries. Totalling approximately 200,000 people, the hill tribes are distributed throughout the rugged mountainous areas of this region, from elevations of 2,000 feet to over 7,000 feet. With few exceptions, these non-Thai ethnic peoples are slash-and-burn hill farmers, believing in animistic religions, and having changed little from the social customs and mores practiced by their forefathers centuries ago.

There are those groups among the hill tribes who have lived in Thailand for more than twenty years, and yet, incredibly, have never seen a Thai man. The author would like to recall an incident while visiting an Akha village as recently as November, 1960.

It was no surprise to the author to be informed by the Akha headman that he was the first American to visit that particular village. The real truth of their isolated society was made clear when the Akha chieftain inquired, with equal curiosity, as to the "tribe" to which the author's two Thai companions belonged. When he learned that these gentlemen were Thais, the chieftain's amazed retort was, "Oh, so this is what the Thai men look like!"

In this report, the author presents some of the more pertinent aspects of the hill tribes in northern Thailand as he has been privileged to see them. The objective is an overall review of current social, cultural and economic conditions, together with a brief analysis of the historical and ethnic background of each tribal subdivision.
While this report is by no means a work of formal ethnology, the author has found it unavoidable to include some terminology more suitable to students of ethnology. This slight inconvenience to the lay readers might be justified in view of the necessity, at times, to further clarify tribal origins, and establish a more realistic classification of the different tribes.

Since there is no existing census on the hill tribes of this region, the author has made population estimates based on known villages of the various tribes. The average persons per house, and houses per village have been worked out by studying representative villages of each tribe.

Of the three main ethnic divisions (Tibeto-Burmese, Wa and Yao-Meo-Pateng) represented among the northern hill tribes, the author has classified the various subdivisions into 20 groups or tribes. Their linguistic affiliations serve as the primary criterion, and in several cases, the author uses the tribe's own name for themselves rather than the name or names which have been given them. This was necessary in order to remove misnomers, inaccurate tribal designations, and an unreasonable splitting of ethnic hairs.

Available published material is not only limited, but often dated or inaccurate. The author has therefore collected much of the information for this report during his travels between August and December, 1960, and has drawn from his observations over many years of working and living among the hill tribes. Statistical data was collected through the excellent cooperation of the Thai Border Patrol Police, Area No. 5, various Changwad and Amphur officials, missionaries and through visitations to representative villages of each tribe.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author expresses his deep gratitude to the various agencies of the Government of Thailand and to the United States Operations Mission to Thailand, without whose help and encouragement, this report could not have been accomplished.

Many individuals have contributed appreciably to the successful conclusion of this report. The author wishes particularly to acknowledge the enthusiastic support given him by the Ministry of Agriculture/USOM Coordinator, Nai Boon Indrambarya, and the cooperation and assistance rendered by the officers and enlisted men of the 5th Area, Border Patrol Police. Special thanks are also extended to Rev. Ernest Hiembach of the O.M.F. Mission, Rev. Andrew Yousko of the A.B.M. Mission and Mr. Garland Bare and Mr. Leland Calloway of the C. of C. Mission, for their constructive criticisms and valuable information on the Htin, Yao, Meo, Kha Mu, Karen and Kha Haw tribes.
ORIGINS OF THE HILLTRIBES OF NORTHERN THAILAND

SINO-TIBETAN STOCK (Mongoloids)

- Southern Migration
  - Lo Lo/Nosu
    - Tibeto-Burman
      - Karen Group
        - Akha
        - Lahu Na
          - P'wo
          - Skaw
          - Taungthu
        - Lahu Nyi
        - Lahu Shehleh
      - Lisu
      - Lahu Shi
    - B'ghwe

MICRONESIAN-POLYNESIAN STOCK (Negroids)

- Northern Migration
  - Main Chinese
    - Yao-Meo-Pateng
      - Haw
      - Blue Meo
      - White Meo
    - Yao
  - Wa
    - ?
    - Lawa
    - Kha Mu
    - Kha Haw
    - Htin
    - Phi-Tong-Luang
    - Guam B'wa
A DESCRIPTION OF SOME ESTABLISHED PATTERNS OF HILLTRIBES IMMIGRATION INTO NORTHERN THAILAND AND THE GENERAL REGIONS OF LAOS AND BURMA FROM WHENCE THEY HAVE COME
NORTH THAILAND

DISTRIBUTION OF HILLTRIBES (2)

SKAW KAREN
P'WO KAREN
B'GHWE KAREN
TAUNOTHU
MEO (3 TRIBES)
LISU
NORTH THAILAND
DISTRIBUTION OF THE HILLTRIBES (3)
Including Hill-Farming Thai Peoples
AKHA
YAO
HAW
YUMBRI
MOUNTAIN THAI
WITH REFERENCE TO THE AREA OF THE HILLTRIBES SURVEY AND THE SOURCES AND DRAINAGE OF THE MAIN RIVERS

xiv
Akha village "male"

Akha girls dancing

An Akha Chieftain

Akha man with queue
Akha girls sorting cotton yarns (Sen Chai village, Chiengrai)
Affiliation: The Akha is one of the Tibeto-Burman groups which have certain linguistic relationships to the Lahu and Lisu (see Lahu and Lisu). It is generally believed that the Akha is a branch of the ancient Lo Lo or No-Su tribes that came into Kweichow and Yunnan provinces about the same time (some 4000 years ago) that the various Meo groups formed into tribes in Kweichow, China. Unlike the Meo, who are thought to have come from areas east of Kweichow, the Lo-Lo came from regions to the northwest of Yunnan-Kweichow, and from these people, the Akha moved into southern Yunnan province. Wider racial affiliations are difficult to trace. They are an interesting tribe and suggest to an observer stronger Tibetan influence than the Lahu, but not as much of this influence as the Lisu seems to retain. Chinese characteristics are faint. Most of Thailand’s Akha have come from Burma and some from Laos, where they are found in greater numbers.

Location: Thailand’s present Akha area is limited mainly to Amphurs Mac Sai and Mac Chan, Chiangrai Province. That they were once located as far south as Prae and at Doi Sutep, Chiangmai (Seidenfaden) is most doubtful, since the Akha are comparative newcomers to Thailand and apparently have never moved south of the Mac Kok river.

Population: While official estimates have placed the Akha population at a few thousand, the actual population is much greater when the more remote villages along the Mae Chan-Burma border areas are studied. From reliable sources and personal visitations, the author ventures to estimate the total Akha population in Thailand at 25,200 people, found in the 88 known villages and 2,600 households. The study has shown that an average Akha village has 30 or more houses with 9.5 persons per house. (Comment: The Akha have surprisingly jumped from what had been considered one of the smallest hilltribe groups to the third largest division in northern Thailand, after the Skaw Karen and the Blue Meo.)

Language: The language is Tibeto-Burman which is related to the Lo-Lo dialects and akin to Lahu and Lisu, although none of these languages are inter-intelligible. It is mono-syllabic, tonal and
with rare final consonants. There are a few borrowed words from Chinese.

Despite the fact that most of the Akha are limited to contacts within their own area, they are remarkable linguists. Thailand's Akha have come into their new homeland with a rich command of Yunnanese and Lahu which very few of them do not speak well, excluding many of the women and children. They are generally fluent in Shan and modify this Thai dialect into Lao Thai. It is surprising that the Akha, unlike the Lahu, have learned to pronounce final consonants when using Shan, since their own language is as much lacking in this as the Lahu language. In Thailand they are nonliterate, and have no native script, some of the Akha in Burma use an English missionary-taught script.

Religion: The Akha are strictly animists who attach considerable importance to the souls of the dead. At present there are no converts among Thailand's Akha to any other religious beliefs. They do not believe in any god or gods, simply that benevolent and malicious spirits dwell in all things, causing sickness and curing sickness.

Simple altars are built in each house to keep good spirits that guard the household and elaborate gates are made about a hundred yards from the village over the approaching trail to keep good spirits and guard against the evil ones. These gates are kept in a fashion that is considered to be beautiful for the guardian spirits and frightening to the evil spirits. Dead dogs are hung over the tops of the gates and allowed to rot and stink to repel the bad spirits which walk by night and various symbols are carved out of wood to insure safety in general health and fertility of the village. There are pornographic carvings and some phallic symbols, which the Akha believe to establish fertility in a fashion that cannot be harmed or removed by the evil spirits.

Sacrifices of chickens, pigs and small quantities of rice, peppers and water are made at all events such as weddings, funerals and during sickness, in order to gain the aid and attention of the good spirits. The evil spirits are thought to be frightened and exorcised away by the shooting of guns into the air, above and below the village, when a person is near death. Special times are set to have a general house-cleaning of the bad spirits, in which everyone participates to “chase” the spirits. People stand in front of their houses with clubs, and when someone shouts that the spirit or spirits
are coming their way, violent beating and shouting ensues, until the
exorcist proclaims that the bad spirits have fled. There have been
incidents when a bad spirit is thought to have entered a person during
these drives, and such unfortunates have sometimes been clubbed
to death.

The Akha have great fear of the water spirits and seldom take
baths for fear of the bad spirits entering their bodies. It is con-
sidered better to wipe away filth from hands and faces than wash
them. Needless to say, they are a malodorous and filthy people on
the whole for this reason, and a far cry from some of the more
assimilated Akha in Burma.

Villages: The Akha live on ridge tops on elevations over 4,000 feet.
They prefer a village site to which there is but one approach, usually
from the east. Their houses are built on the ground and elevated
at the lower sides when made on steeper hillsides. Bamboo slats
usually serve for walls, but split wood planks are also sometimes
used. The posts are made from sturdy saplings which are placed,
during the construction, only after the first, or "mother" post has
been planted. The "mother" post is considered most sacred, serving
thereafter as the "home" of the guardian spirit, and nothing may
be hung or attached to these posts. The Akha will say to visitors,
"You may rest in this house, and also bring your pony in with you,
but please do not tether him to our 'mother post'."

The houses are usually quite roomy and divided into a forward
working and guest section, with partitioned sleeping quarters for
the family in back. The rice bins and pots of fermenting liquor are
all placed inside the front section, with dogs, chickens and pigs
wandering in and out. The roofs are mostly of thatchgrass and also
made from palm fronds in some areas.

The average Akha village has about 30 houses. The larger
villages have 50 or more houses, clustered in close proximity to
each other.

Physical Description: The Akha people are difficult, even for the
new visitor, to confuse with other tribes. Their dress, especially
that of the women, is so distinct that they can be identified from
other tribes from a long distance.

They are a light-brown skinned, stocky-built people, and in
larger villages there are some strikingly handsome people. The
women are very short, averaging about 4 feet 6 inches, but the men
are about 5 feet 6 inches in height, a good "average" as hillmen go. Smaller villages often show unattractive individuals, possibly the result of inbreeding, together with poor health and sanitary conditions. Generally, the villages to the south of the main Akha area, are appalling examples of bad health, sanitation, and social habits. They all chew betel nut, even the children. The men brew a wicked corn whiskey on which they get very drunk on special occasions.

The Akha women wear a cloth headdress, which is shaped like an inverted bag on a bamboo frame with elaborate decorations. Silver coins and buttons, beads, embroidery and tufts of gibbon ape fur cover the entire hat. Some Akha women use dog tails as part of the hat trappings. The married women wear a longer, more elaborate headdress as a sign of their married status. The jackets, which reach the hips, open at the front, and are fastened with large silver buckles shaped like flowers. Patterns of colorful cloth are sewn crosswise on the sleeves and embroidered designs are made on the hems. Many beads and heavy silver neck rings are worn with the full dress. There is a small apron of tassels and beadwork worn in front, and very short skirts, about 14-inches long, of plain, black homespun material which reach just above the knees. These are worn very low around the hips. Their bags are very fancy, and have monkey fur tufts and many beads. The leggings also have many colors and beadwork.

The men dress in plain black homespuns for daily dress, usually bare from the waist up, or in black jackets and large black turbans. On gala occasions, a more elaborate jacket with fancy hem embroideries, a silver neckring and silver bangles are worn. The younger boys will wear a cloth cap with red, white and green cloth designs, and the men wear tightly wound black turbans. The tobacco pipe is a constant part of every Akha man and woman.

Every Akha man must wear a short queue, without which he believes that he will surely go insane. The rest of the head is usually clean-shaven. The women wear their hair parted in the middle, and drawn down over the ears and into a knot inside the headdress. The only time that the headdress is removed briefly, is during the dressing of the hair. The headdress is kept in place with a cord under the chin. Even when sick, or during sleep, or on the death-bed, the married Akha woman may not remove her headdress for religious reasons.
While one seldom hears of venereal diseases among the Akha, malaria, worms and bad sores are very common. Since they do not bathe often, it is amazing to note how "clean" and neat they appear when in full dress, but closer approach might inform the visitor differently. The habits among the "wilder" Akha is often shocking, with much of their inherent modesty disregarded. They are rough and barbaric, and have little to do with people from other villages or tribes.

**Economy:** The Akha continue to be opium growers, selling most of their product rather than smoking it themselves. A few jungle products are sold in addition to opium, and this constitutes their entire source of cash income. They raise many pigs and chickens, but these are either consumed or used for sacrificial purposes and seldom sold. Dogs are an important source of meat and raised enthusiastically for this purpose. They grow corn, millet, sugarcane and vegetables, but in insufficient quantities to meet their needs, so that more jungle foods must be sought. The Akha eat nearly everything that could possibly be eaten from the jungles, including maggots and animals thought to be "unclean" by other tribes.

The Akha have blacksmiths and even silversmiths in a few of their villages, who turn out hoes, axes and knives of lower quality in workmanship than that of other hilltribes. They have not learned to use grinding stones and pound most of their grain by hand or foot-pounders. They do not keep many cattle and never use them as draft animals, although a few Akha have ponies for pack purposes. Pigs are the most important livestock kept, often being in much better condition than those found in Lahu and Lisu villages. The women spend much of their time working on fancy costumes and weaving homespun cloth, made from the cotton which they grow themselves. The young people are out constantly, looking for edible jungle products, coming home in the evenings to show proudly the day's find of maggots, grubs, larvae of bees and wasps, and various jungle vegetables.

**Contact:** The Akha are not a friendly people on the whole, being more frightened of outsiders than hating them. They believe that outsiders, especially those people coming from the lower elevations, bring with them all sorts of harmful evil spirits which might enter the Akha people. Yet they do not like to venture out of their village areas, to meet other people for purposes of trading opium, and
usually do this at home. Relatively few Akha have become bold enough to visit the towns and cities, although they might be seen at times in Chiangrai town and around Mae Chan. An exception to this is found in a few villages which have had the benefit of Border Police schooling. Akha living within two days march from Mae Chan may never have seen this town, and many of them, after living in Thailand for nearly twenty years have never seen a Thai! (This partially explains the gross underestimation of the Akha population that has been accepted to date.) Some Akha become quite friendly with Lahu, Yao, Lisu and the few Hau tribesmen who live near them. These contacts are infrequent enough to make it an amazing characteristic, that these people have nevertheless acquired their fine linguistic abilities.

**Social Customs:** Other hill tribes consider the Akha to be distinctive for two reasons; that of dog-flesh eating, and their customs concerning virgins. Each Akha village or a circle of villages has an official "male" or "Aw Shaw" whose duty it is to prepare all virgins for marriage by deflowering them at certain ceremonies each year. Very little value is placed upon Akha girls, and their marriage does not benefit the parents in any way. A man will bring a wife into the family and thereby add another working hand, but a girl is a dead loss to her parents after she has reached the age for marriage. The bridegroom is out only the cost of a fat pig for the celebration. An Akha man can have more than one wife if he desires, and it is not uncommon to hear of Akha girls being sold as slaves.

The women do most of the work, both in the fields and at home. The men may be found at the villages most of the time, except during heavy field-clearing days. The children must also work very hard, along with the women.

Much time is spent in propitiating the spirits and in preparing sacrifices for all sorts of occasions. The dead are carried away from the village always to the west, buried in shallow graves with a mound built over it, and the mounds covered with brambles. Pigs are sacrificed at the graves and cannot be eaten afterwards.

The Akha are not great musicians, but have a simple stringed instrument which they play during their leisure. They have a quaint dance in which the men stamp around in a circle and the women form a line to shuffle back and forth in quick short skips. They chant songs during these occasions, usually during the New Year observances, in a mournful, somewhat Chinese-like tune, very
ermitious and simple. Their main pride is in the dressing up for festive occasions, at which time the men like to strut about showing off their finery, especially the silver tobacco tin which is always held in one hand in obvious view to all.

There are no organized games of any kind in which the adults participate, and the children simply amuse themselves around the village in any way they choose at the moment. Courting is usually subtly done out in the fields and is invariably a very brief affair. The morals are high, since marriage is so easy and also because virgins cannot be defiled until the "Male" has first pronounced them marriagable. In rare cases there are violations of this law, and resulting fear of condemnation is sometimes enough to cause a young girl to commit suicide.

Witchcraft is very strongly believed in by the Akha, and there are frequent cases in which a person is supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, being enabled by such to become a werewolf. There are one or more exorcists in each village who are ever busy with such problems, but these men have little say in the village government.

Village Government: An Akha chieftain is always selected by the village elders and is in charge of all matters in village government. Fines are imposed for misdemeanors and punishment can become very serious for bad crimes. Banishment from a village is more common in the case of a thief, but a murderer may have his hands cut off and then be beheaded. Women are beaten mercilessly for the slightest offense against the men, and are sometimes clubbed to death. A form of punishment that is equivalent to the death penalty to an Akha man is to have his queue cut off. The psychological effect is enough to actually drive the poor unfortunate into insanity.

There are no recognized warriors as such or designated persons who must carry out law enforcement as the Chieftain might decree. These are picked by the chief when he needs them. The elders do not form up councils, but leave everything to the chief to decide.

Trends: While it might appear, because of the large population, that the Akha have suddenly come into Thailand, they have been in Thailand for twenty years or more, with few new arrivals. They have kept within the border areas of northern Mae Chan-Mae Sai
area, and have not moved further south or east. They do, however, change their village sites often, about once every 5 or 6 years, and relocate their homes even more frequently within a given village site. Sickness or death often means that the old home is no longer suitable and a new site, with a new "mother post" must be sought. There is a high death rate among the Akha but the rate of population increase is still some 3% per annum. They do not inter-marry with other tribes and a tendency for inbreeding results. This problem, however, depends much upon the particular circle of Akha in question. They have nearly exhausted their present farming lands in Amphur Mae Chan, and there are indications that the Akha will begin to migrate westward, along the northern banks of the Mae Kok river. They also have an eye on the more sparsely inhabited sections of the Doi Chang mountain complex, just south of the Mae Kok river. To date, the Akha do not show any significant improvements in their relationships and contacts with the plainspeople. There are no signs of new agricultural practices, or desires to improve their primitive methods. The Akha represent one of the least-contacted hilltribes, and are among the most backward and primitive people to be found in Thailand today. For this reason, the Border Police are to be praised for the remarkable success which they have had in making educational headways at one Akha village in Amphur Mae Chan. This is certainly the first instance of its kind in Thailand, and an important precedent.
Lahu Nyi girls

A Lahu Nyi Chieftain's daughter

Lahu Nyi "paw khu" sitting near his house

Lahu Nyi Hunter and cross-bow
Lahu Nyi village, Amphur Fang, Chiangmai

Lahu Nyi House

A Lahu Na girl in full dress (rear view)

A Lahu Na girl in full dress (front view)
THE LAHU NYI AND LAHU NA
(MUSSUH DAENG, MUSSUH DAM)

Affiliation: Tibeto-Burman of Lo-Lo extraction originating from southern Yunnan, China. There are similarities and relationships which all of the Lahu tribes have with the Lisu and Akha, suggesting a common (Lo-Lo) origin. However, Lahu traditions would place themselves closer to the Karens, having as they claim, been "brothers of the same clans" at one time. The Lahu Na and Lahu Nyi have only slight linguistic differences, but have distinctly different tribal dress. In the case of the Lahu Na (their name for themselves) it might be said that they are the "pure" Lahu, coming from the permanently established Lahu Na to be found in Yunnan and northeastern Burma. In Thailand, both of these subdivisions are comparative newcomers, having lived not more than fifty years away from Burma and Laos, from whence they have come. The Lahu Nyi (or "Southern Lahu")* prefer to call themselves "Lahu-ya", meaning "Lahu people", and resent the "red" designation given them by the Shans and Thai. "Red" Mussuh comes from a rude meaning of the word "red", denoting "rawness" rather than the color of the Lahu Nyi women's skirt, as popularly believed. "Mussuh" is a Shan word meaning "hunter" and is used by the Thai for the Lahu tribes. The Lahu Na have called themselves "Na" or black Lahu for centuries and are considered by the other Lahu groups as the "great" or "root-stock" Lahu.

Location: Thailand's Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na are rather scattered about in the northern area, with predominantly many more Lahu Nyi than Lahu Na. Substantial circles of Lahu Nyi are to be found in the provinces of Chiengmai, northeastern Mae Hongson, northern and western Chiengrai, and northern Tak. There does not now appear to be any trend for the Lahu Nyi to move further south, but some of them (about 5%) have moved back to Burma in the past three years, or since early 1958. The few villages of Lahu Na are to be found in Chiengrai and northern Chiengmai Province and represent groups that have come from both Burma and Laos. (These true

* The Lahu Nyi are actually a direct off-shoot of the Lahu Na, and most of their differences stems from a geographical separation over some 150 years. Also called "Mong Taue" (Shan for "southern") Lahu. "Mong Neu" (Shan for "northern") Lahu, is a common designation for the Lahu Na.
Lahu Na, or Black Lahu are not to be confused with the so-called “Mussuh Dam” as the Shehleh or Na Mwe Lahu are sometimes called by the Thai. Mussuh Dam means literally “Black Mussuh”, and would be a more correct term for the Lahu Na.)

**Population:** A conservative estimate for these two tribes is 9,200 Lahu Nyi and 3,000 Lahu Na now residing in northern Thailand. The Lahu Nyi are located within 77 known villages, with an average of 15 houses per village and 8 persons per house. The Lahu Na have 25 known villages with the same averages.

**Language:** The Lahu speak a Tibeto-Burman dialect which is monosyllabic with three tonal variations. The language has many similar words to Burmese and to the Lisu and Akha dialects, with some borrowed terms of Shan and Chinese origin. Most Lahu men speak limited Shan or Lao, and a few of them speak the romanized missionary script. None of the Lahu Nyi are literate, and few of them are actually bilingual. The two tribes enjoy complete mutual intelligence, although they have difficulties with the Shehleh or Na Mwe Lahu, and are unable to understand the Lahu Shi any more than they could the Lisu. The inability for the Lahu to pronounce final consonants makes it very difficult for them to speak a Thai dialect well.

**Religion:** With very few exceptions, Thailand’s Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na are theistic animists. The exceptions are Christians from Burma, numbering less than 200 people. Their animism is similar, including a theism quite unique and different from other tribes found in Thailand. They believe in a “Father God” who is the creator of all things good, and a vast host of good and evil spirits which must be propitiated in order to survive sickness and accidents. The spirits or “nye” are supposed to inhabit all inanimate objects and sometimes thought to take possession of living creatures, becoming “taw” or a sort of werewolf. Providing that a man is free from the four unpardonable sins of adultery, theft, debt and murder, he will be recalled to a “heaven”, otherwise, a “hell” comprised of seven great dipping pots awaits the condemned. Each village has a “paw khu” or religious leader who dreams and conjures the explanations and interpretations that he must give the people. The paw khu is a very powerful man in any Lahu village, having more power, in cases, than the village headman or chieftain. Some of the paw khus become
“man gods” in the eyes of the Lahu and in such cases they become intoxicated with power and often mislead their people into terrible undertakings and “purification” purges. At present, a Lahu “man god” (called Pu Chawng Luang or Paw Khu Luang by Thais) lives in Burma, south of Kengtung and has been responsible for recalling many Thailand Lahu back to live near him. He claims to have “the magic hammer (death-dealing) and the magic rope, together with the magic knife”, with which he is able to kill all enemies, even should they number as many as the “sesame seeds to be found in three baskets”. Such dreamers have come up in the last sixty years and cause menaces which hurt the Lahu economically and socially.

The Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na believe in a form of theistic animism which is a deviation from that of their cousins in Burma and Laos. These Thailand Lahu also follow teachings promulgated by a Lahu religious leader, who died about 1890 in Mong Ka, southern Yunnan. Called “Ah Sha Fu Cu”, (Yunnanese meaning “Ah Sha, Lord of the Temple”) this man called his people to his death bed telling them to “burn the beeswax candles and joss-sticks, that the day might soon come when the Lahu people will receive their enlightenment from God”. Those Lahu in Burma who became Christians considered the “enlightenment” to have been the coming of Christian missionaries. Others continue to await the enlightenment and burn candles and joss-sticks to this day. The animistic Lahu today calls himself “peh tu pa” or “beeswax burner” and the religious attachment to this practice stems from ideas instilled by Ah Sha Fu Cu. They have carried this practice a step further, so that the aroma of the joss-sticks is thought to please the good spirits which protect them.

Each Lahu house has an altar at which the joss-sticks and beeswax candles are burned “to please and humor the guardian good spirits”. At the head of the village, a nat house is built, called a “Kha-shuh” at which water and rice is offered on the 8th day of the waxing, and on the 8th day of the waning moons. In cases of serious sickness, chickens and small pigs are sacrificed to invoke the blessings of the good spirits. The “paw khu” will place cords on the wrists of the people which are tied on with incantations, to keep the evil spirits from harming the individual. Only the “paw khu” or the village chieftain is authorized to place offerings to the spirits at the spirit shrine or “Kha-shuh”, but each householding man will place joss-sticks and offerings at his own shrine or “Sha-shuh”. They
have no ancestor worship or reverence rituals, but honor the living distinguished elders.

**Villages**: All of Thailand's Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na live on elevations above 4000 feet in elevation, choosing flat ridge tops just below the summits of the higher ranges. The water source is generally a long way from the village and must be carried by the women and children in bamboo joints and gourds, sometimes from as far as two miles. The houses, built of bamboo on wood piles, and roofed with thatch grass, are clustered together around the larger house of the headman or the paw khu. The size of the houses varies according to the number of inhabitants, but usually not in larger dimensions than 25 by 20 meters. The hearth is always built in the middle of the house, with racks hung above it on which seeds and various commodities are stored and dried. A single knotted log generally serves as the step, which approaches first an open porch on which water is stored for use in the house. Livestock is tethered at night under the houses and many fierce dogs guard each house. Some of the Lahu villages have a separate dance house, which is reinforced with three or four layers of bamboo slats in order to withstand the vigorous pounding and stamping of the dancers.

**Physical Description**: These two tribes of Lahu are a rather fair-skinned (light brown) people of stocky build. The men average 5'5" in height and the women about 4'8". They are, by and large, an attractive, well-proportioned people, but cleanliness of the individuals, and especially the village grounds is lacking. They are, however, clean people as compared to the Akha. Malaria, worms and sore eyes are common, but there are no venereal diseases or cases of leprosy among the Lahu.

There are many Lahu men and older women who are addicted to opium. These individuals often become appalling wrecks and a burden upon their people. It is estimated that about 16% of the adult population of Lahu in Thailand are opium smokers of varying degrees of addiction. In contrast to the opium addicts, the men who do not use this drug are often very fine specimens of humanity, with exceptional leg and back development. They are the most agile hunters and mountain climbers to be found among the hilltribes. All of the adults chew betel nut habitually.

The women wear colorful jackets and skirts of predominantly red hues and heavy silver disk buckles to fasten the fronts of the
jackets. They use black, white and sometimes various other colored cloth in quilted patterns rather than embroidered work, on their jackets and skirt hems. Smaller silver buttons are sewn in patterns on the jackets together with old silver “rupee” coins. The handmade skirts have simple, transverse lines and wide hems. The men wear black jackets and loose trousers reaching just below the knees. Leggings are worn by most Lahu as part of their fancy costume although they were originally used while working in the fields to keep off the parasitic flies. A black turban wound into a large “doughnut” is worn by the men, but the women usually do not wear turbans and fix their hair into a “bun” on the top of their heads. Silver neck rings, flattened, and having designs, and wide silver bracelets complete the Lahu woman’s dress. The Lahu make beautiful bags of various designs, either hand-woven or from quilted material, with tassels and sometimes silver limpets attached. The Lahu Na of Thailand have deviated from the original styles still found in Burma, and have adopted variations of the Lahu Nyi style, so that the main differences are sometimes only found in the patterns and designs of the silver work. The original Lahu Na women’s costume is a long tunic, which reaches the ankles.

Economy: Thailand’s Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na are primarily opium growers, with peppers and dried game meat being their only other source of cash income. Preceding the opium season (late October to February) rice and corn are grown and harvested as the main staple. Side crops include melons, pumpkins, the “year around bean” (Cajanus cajan), millet, yams, potatoes, cucumbers, bananas, and mustard. The main livestock raised are swine and chickens used mainly for home consumption. Some Lahu have ponies and mules as beasts of burden, and are beginning to raise more cattle. The Lahu in the Muang Fang area make contracts with Thai farmers to keep their cattle and buffaloes in mountain pastures until fattened, accepting as payment, a calf for every ten animals fattened. Most of the swine kept by Lahu are allowed to roam the jungles around the villages for the main part of their diet, with a daily feeding of rice bran and chopped banana stalks “to keep them knowing their master”, more than as a real fattening ration. Some Lahu have realized the value of feeding their hogs with crushed corn as part of the feed and partially cook the banana stalks before feeding. The chickens are fed corn and rice and also roam at will. Few Lahu make substantial hog pens or stalls of any kind and lose a great number of their pigs to leopards and tigers each year.
The system of agriculture is slash-and-burn hoe cultivation. Most fields are used about three years at most and abandoned to the weeds. An old field is reclaimed in ten to fifteen years, if no new fields are available. Cutting of the trees begins in January and burned off in March. “Early rice” is generally planted in September in separate fields to be harvested in March. The main rice crop is planted (broadcast by hand) in May and harvested in late October. Corn and other crops follow along through the year. Opium is planted late in October and harvested in January and February. An average family will clear about 20 rai of new land in each three-year period.

All hill tribesmen are great hunters, but the Lahu Na, followed by the Lahu Nyi are the most distinguished, as their name “Mussuh” might imply. Hunting has become an important part of their economy, both for meat for the family larder and to sell to the plainspeople. The Lahu man has a seven-day work week in which two or three days are devoted to hunting and trapping. There is a saying among Lahu, “When the Lahu man goes away from the mountains, he longs more for the hunt than for his own family.” Part of this love for the hunt comes from the Lahu’s desire to distinguish himself as a great hunter. The most respected man is one who can claim the title of “supreme hunter”, an equivalent in their society to the most esteemed of our Ph. D.’s, and degree which is bravely earned by the Lahu hunter. They use the crossbow with amazing skill. Some of the Lahu make their entire living by selling the smoke-cured meat of deer and wild cattle and the velvet horns of sambur buck as medicine to the plainspeople.

Contact: The Lahu depend upon the plainspeople only for salt, and for this they must make periodic contacts with the villages and towns of the valleys. Other than this, brief contacts with opium buyers, and buyers of jungle products and pepper, constitutes their business relationship. The Lahu living closer to Thai villages have become quite friendly and trade for cloth and medicines, but generally, they avoid any contacts that are not really important. The main reason is their fear of malaria and other “evil spirits of the valleys”.

Traditionally, the Lahu have been unable to understand the people of the lower regions, and varying degrees of animosity mars these relationships. The Lahu take very deeply to heart the slightest jokes made about them by even the children, when they visit a Thai town, and considers that all plainspeople mock and look down upon
them. He is, by nature, very proud of being a Lahu and has always felt that he is "on top" and a better man, because he lives on higher elevations. He admires, but refuses to adopt, the plains farmer's very much more progressive and productive systems. By and large, the Lahu of Thailand have yet to realize that there is a need to become better acquainted with the plainspeople and that real mutual benefits can come of these relations.

There are frequent contacts with the Lisu, Akha and Yao tribes who live near the Lahu, and these people are able to live in reasonable harmony together. Oddly, it is these other tribesmen who learn to speak the Lahu dialect so fluently, rather than the Lahu speaking the other tongues. There is very little trade or intermarriage between these tribes, but the relationships are usually cordial, perhaps because they often join as "brothers of the hunt". The Lahu do not like the Chinese and have little to do with the Meo tribes. There are some contacts made with the Karen tribes. In some cases, the young people leave the clan to become Thais or members of other tribes, or join opium gangs to wander far away from their people.

Social Customs: The main celebration that the Lahu keep is a four-day observance of the Chinese New Year. The dates do not always correspond, since the village elders will select the period according to convenience, so this may fall on any four days between the first and last of January each year. This is the period when the fanciest and most colorful dress is worn, and much dancing and feasting accompanies the event. The Lahu perform a dance involving much stamping and foot-pounding for the men and boys, and the women form a close swaying circle around the dancers. They blow a gourd-and-reed pipe called a "Naw" continuously throughout the dancing, and stop off for feasts. Guns are fired off into the air to usher in the new year. Gifts of glutinous rice cakes are made to each other and the special "washing" of elders' hands by the young people in order to obtain their blessings.

This is also the period of courtship for the young people, who will camp out some distance from the village at two big fires, one for the girls and one for the boys. Lovesongs are sung back and forth, as continuous ballads and improvised prose, all through the night. In the morning, the boys "charge" the girls, and try to take the turban from the girl that appeals to the particular individual. The returning of this turban then starts off a go-between negotiation and more serious
personal contacts. A period of premarital sexual relationship invariably precedes the actual weddings. The new year's courtship is usually conducted between different villages of the same tribe, and is the big event from which most of the weddings result, but there are individual courtings and lovesong singing throughout the year, which encourages much promiscuity among the young people. Marriages do not have to await the new year and are performed whenever the parents of both parties have given their consent, usually in a simple, informal manner at the home of the man's parents. According to Lahu code, the young man must first serve a son-in-lawship of three years at the girl's home before he can establish his own home or return to his father's house with his wife. Thailand's Lahu usually settle for a cash settlement of from 300 to 1000 Baht in lieu of the son-in-lawship, paid by the young man to the bride's parents, but invariably the young man does not have this amount and must therefore serve his father-in-law for a period.

While fornication among the young unmarried people is often punishable when the "paw khu" interprets this as the cause of sickness or loss of livestock to predatory animals, these relations are not considered to be serious sins. They are thought only to "displease the spirits sometimes", and more often the young people are actually rebuked by their parents, if they do not show enthusiasm in looking for a mate. Among these Lahu tribes, it is generally the young girls who do the pursuing, fixing themselves up prettily with orchids in their hair and enticing the young men from their homes at night by playing the bamboo mouth harps, or blowing shrill notes in "love codes" on leaves. A tired young man, just back from a long hunt, might be peacefully sleeping in his house only to be awakened by bamboo sticks which the girls jab at him through the bamboo slat floor from under the house, whispering to him, "You are single, so to sleep when you are married. We dare you to come out into the night!"

Another social event at which the young people gather each "sab-bath", (the middle and end of each moon phase) is the religious purification dance. This is an all-night, indoor affair in which the young people whirl around a central post, which has beeswax candles burning on it. The Lahu Nyi especially, feel that these strenuous dances will purify any sins of which the young people are guilty, and carry this dance to climaxes which become sensual, and ending in exhausted, self-induced trances. An "outsider" very seldom is allowed to witness these dances, but he would be amazed
to see the ability and terrible roughness with which both the girls and boys conduct themselves. In their frenzied, trance-like state, individuals will crash right through the side of the house, landing with a great thud on the ground below, without apparently hurting themselves. The next day, the same young people will be off to the fields with their parents without any signs of the rough-and-tumble sleepless night before.

The Lahu enjoy singing their ballads and lovesongs and blowing the gourd pipes. Their songs are often rich with references to nature. Each season has a meaning to their way of life, so that when the Lahu must finally stop his traditional system of cutting new fields, something will have been removed from their joy of living. Rather than consider this is a back-breaking chore, the Lahu enjoy the sound of axes ringing and the crash of big trees. With the harvest come the giant "harvest" cicadas to whose ringing symphony the Lahu feels urged to burst into song and pipe music. The dances signify the events of each season, the cutting, harvesting, threshing and pounding of rice.

The main games played by both adult and young Lahu men is top-fighting. Heavy wooden tops are made from the hardest wood and teams alternately set and hit each others' spinning tops, thrown from long cord whips. To the children, the daily chasing about in the villages and tramps off into the jungles are games enough to keep them well-occupied. Although no other benefits attend their needs and training, the children develop an appreciation and education in Natural History which is second to none.

**Village Government:** Many Lahu villages in Thailand have little or no contact with Changwad, Amphur, or Tambol authorities and continue to regard their chieftains and Paw Khus as supreme leaders. Depending upon the particular clans concerned, the headman may be self-established or selected by a council of elders. They are quarrelsome people, whose villages often split up, to follow a new leader. In the event that an old chieftain resigns or dies, the village council selects a worthy and willing individual. It is the chieftain's duty to decide all legal issues, holding at times, the power of life or death for convicted criminals. If the chieftain has difficulties, the council of elders is called together to work out the problems. The "paw khu", who is automatically a member of the council, has strong say and veto power, interpreting many issues as having religious significance and needing a "decision by the spirits".
Lahu villages which have no contact with Amphur and Tambol authorities will have several warriors designated as “po” (a sort of sheriff) to carry out the law. It is the “po’s” duty to enforce the chief’s decisions and on rare occasions, executions. While the death sentence is rare among Thailand’s Lahu, it might be given individuals for murder or theft, and occasionally, for cases of adultery that have been interpreted by the “paw khu” as being responsible for a death in the village through offended spirits. By and large, the death penalty depends upon the mood of the elders, or the chieftain, and is usually carried out by decapitation with the long knife by a village “po”. The Chieftain has set fines for other crimes, payable in old silver rupee coins in multiples of seven, e.g. seven rupees for allowing a pony or bull to enter and damage another man’s field; twenty-one rupees for divorce, etc. The most common suits that the Lahu bring on each other are sexual misdemeanors, disputes over rights to take the larvae of the great wasps, the most prized of delicacies. If the chambers of the wasps, that have been robbed by persons disregarding the “claim” of another, measures the size of a small pig, a full-grown pig must be forfeited. If the chamber measures the size of a calf, a full-grown bull must be given. For fornication, (which “causes loss of chickens and minor sicknesses”) the suspected young couple will be whipped soundly and forced to marry. Adultery, is punishable on the spot by death when a couple is caught in the act, but if unseen, it is interpreted to be the cause of livestock losses by tigers and leopards, a lesser crime than when it is thought to be responsible for deaths in the village. In such cases, (of lesser offense) the chief will fine the man “twice” and the woman “once”, shave their heads and make them carry ashes around the village repeating, “Do not do as we have done”. Theft, however slight, is so frowned upon that emotions carry the “judges” away and serious punishment is meted out. The Lahu, however, never torture a victim, and if the death penalty is called for, it is dealt quickly. Banishment from the clan is practiced sometimes for theft, and more commonly, for strange diseases or when a person is accused of possessing an evil spirit.

Lahu traditions require that the dead be buried “towards the setting of the sun” on the tops of ridges. In the case of suicides, the “paw khu” must first drive bamboo splints into the heels of the deceased, “in order to hamper the ghost in its future wanderings”, and the dead are buried, face down, in valleys of difficult access.
Trends: Viewed as a whole, Thailand's Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na do not today show any characteristic trends to assimilate with other tribes or the Thai peoples, nor would they ever move to lower regions. Beginning in early 1958, some 5% of the Lahu in the Fang and Muang Prao area moved back to Burma upon the call of their religious "mán god", but what appeared at the time as the start of a much larger exodus, came to a halt in 1960*, with many Lahu leaders determined that they will not return to Burma. There have been no further moves into the more southern regions, although one village of Sheleh Lahu has moved to a latitude of 16-20' in Tak province. In 1960, the number of Lahu returning to Thailand from Burma, or coming for the first time from Laos and Burma, still remains well under the number of Lahu who left Thailand since 1958. There is a high yearly population increase of approximately 4.6 per cent over the death rate as shown in the attached chart. The Lahu remain a difficult people to deal with, with their many small and scattered communities located in difficult terrain.

* As this paper goes to press, there are increasingly more reports being received to the effect that the Lahu Nyi, and some Lahu Na of Burma are becoming militant and on a sort of "holy war-path". Their "man god" in Burma is primarily responsible for this unrest which could have considerable effect on Thailand's Lahu in 1961.
THE LAHU SHEHLEH
(LAHU NA-MUEY, MUSSUH SHEHLEH)

Affiliation: Sometimes mistakenly called "Mussuh Dam" (Black Lahu) by the Thai, the Shehleh are true Lahu people who differ from the Lahu Nyi in dress and by a peculiar dialectic change in tones. Their language is basically Lahu Na, so that a Lahu Na is almost able to achieve the Shehleh dialect by simply changing his high tones to low and low tones to high. The two tribes have many good laughs in conversing together, because this upside-down difference to them sounds something like "pig latin" would to our ears.

The original home of the Shehleh is located in Shunning District of Yunnan, China, along the headwaters of the Nam Ting river from latitudes 23°-20' to 23°-40', and longitudes 99°-10' to 99°-20'. They called themselves "Na-Muey" Lahu and have adopted the name "Shehleh" (Lahu Nyi name for them) since coming to Thailand some 40 years ago. The Thai have called them "Black Mussuh" because of the predominence of black in the women's dress. The Shehleh have adopted a number of changes from their original customs through the influence of the Lahu Nyi in Thailand.

Location: Thailand's Shehleh are located mostly in Amphur Mae Taeng, Chiangmai Province and sections of Mae Hongson province, and scattered in small communities in Tak Province (Amphur Pai), reaching a latitude of 16°-20'. There are a few villages in Amphur Fang and again in Amphur Doi Sakhet, Chiangmai.

Religion: They are theistic animists after the fashion of the Lahu Nyi, but without placing the same significance upon candle-burning that the Lahu Nyi do. The Shehleh do not believe that there are "purifying qualities" in the sabbatical dances as do the Lahu Nyi, and have done away with all dances almost entirely. They are very superstitious people, believing that it is most important to avoid loud noises and spectacular activities which might draw the attention of the evil spirits. Many chickens and pigs are sacrificed to the spirits to appease them. There are no "man gods" or affiliations with Burma Shehleh in matters of religion, but regular "paw khus" are set up and honored.

Villages: Shehleh villages are usually located on elevations of between 3,500 and 4,500 feet and built on slopes of ridges that are
sometimes very steep. They no longer have the custom of building their homes on the ground as they did in China, but build on wooden piles against the steep slopes. The upper end of the house serves as the approach, spanned with a short log off the side of the mountain to the porch. The houses are lower-roofed than the Lahu Nyi homes and smaller in size. It is perhaps fortunate that the Shehleh do not keep cattle or goats, since these animals would have constant access to the grass roofs which are unprotected by enclosures.

The Shehleh live closer to water sources than other Lahu, but invariably select a village site which has a very steep approach for some 300 meters, or ideally, almost a precipice. This is thought to discourage the “bigger, heavier evil spirits” from climbing the steep hill to the village.

**Physical Description:** The Shehleh are somewhat darker in complexion (brown) than the Lahu Nyi although of comparable size, and show more traces of inbreeding. They are less energetic and slower-moving than other Lahu and are not as attractive physically. They are also chewers of betel nut and smoke opium considerably. Health is poor but no venereal or serious diseases are found among them.

The women wear long pants and long tunics reaching the ankles. Very little silver work or embroidery work appears on even the full dress, and simple, white or yellow bands cross the sleeves, hems and waists of the gowns to add only a little color to an otherwise drab black costume. The leggings, with white cloth bands add a little flash to the women’s clothing, and tightly-wound black turbans are worn with a few head trappings, to complete the full dress. Shehleh men dress very much the same as Lahu Nyi men. The only distinguishing traits being the black and white legging, and the yellow, long-tasseled bags.

**Economy:** The Shehleh are slash-and-burn opium cultivators raising swine for a secondary cash income. The sizes of their fields are smaller than the Lahu Nyi and their income tends to be less. They are a timid people who do not often go to the valleys to trade or barter their goods with the Thai. Most of their pigs are sacrificed or consumed at their villages. Peppers are becoming more important as a cash crop, but the Shehleh have yet to learn to be good businessmen in selling their crops. They are prone to sell their crops to more ambitious Lisu and Lahu men who pay cheap prices for the growing peppers even before harvest.
The Sheleh depend a great deal upon the jungles for their vegetables and meat, trapping and hunting wild game and constantly looking for edible plants. There are no cattle and relatively few chickens in Sheleh villages.

Contact: Timid by nature, the Sheleh seldom associate with the people of the valley. They have practically no inter-tribal marriage. Their main contacts are Lahu and Lisu who come to buy opium and peppers.

Language: The Sheleh speak a Tibeto-Burman language, close to the Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na, (described previously) with a complete tonal change. There are many words unrelated to the Lahu Na, borrowed from Yunnanese. Most Sheleh men speak good Yunnanese and fair Lao-Thai or Shan, although they are unable to pronounce final consonants. Their form of Lahu is inter-intelligible to both the Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na, but not to the Lahu Shi.

Population: There are about 2,200 Sheleh in Thailand according to a 1960 count, located in 14 villages which average 20 houses per village and 8 persons per house. The largest Sheleh village, which moved from Tak in 1958, has 43 houses, located near Doi Sakhet, Chiengmai Province.

Social Customs: The Sheleh observe a brief (2 days) New Year’s celebration, which is quietly conducted at their villages and without involving associations with other villages. The main event is the tying of new wrist cords by the “paw khu” to protect against evil spirits and to perform any weddings that might be lined up. Enough pigs are slaughtered to feed the village and rice cakes are made and roasted on hot coals.

While there are dances and the singing of lovesongs by the young people, everything is characteristically muffled as compared to the Lahu Nyi. The Sheleh practice polygamy, whereas the Lahu Nyi do not condone this as a rule. An important Sheleh chief or elder will have as many as three wives. Although his first wife is usually his own age, his additional wives are very young girls of 14 years or even less. They believe that by marrying a young girl, some of the old man’s age is absorbed by her.

Village Government: The Sheleh chieftain, selected by the elders, is supreme in their society. He rules with an iron hand of religious strictness, being, in most cases, the “paw khu” at the same time. The Sheleh, therefore, are a quiet, moral people with few
offenses which call for punishment by the chieftain. Among Thailand’s Shehleh, no cases of drastic punishment have been reported and they have rarely been to a Thai official with their troubles. The Shehleh have, on a few occasions, been molested by the Lisu and Lahu Nyi, but were pacifistic on these occasions.

**Trends:** Having little contact with other tribes or the Thai peoples, the Shehleh tend to live very much by themselves, and have wandered rather blindly off into areas that seemed to them as being more removed from other people. There are no established patterns as to the particular areas that they might tend more to live in, and they are today moving back and forth within their general localities. They are not conscious of the fact that the Thai Government wishes to see an end to opium cultivation, even though Lahu and Lisu about them are becoming alarmed as to what the future might hold for them. The average Shehleh still conceives that the world is a small, flat thing and that they must surely be near the edge of the world. It is difficult for him to see the broader aspects of reality. He is still a long way from any possibilities of assimilation by other racial groups.
Affiliation: The Lahu Shi (name for themselves and by other Lahu) of Thailand are of the Ba Kio and Ba Lan clans, which differ considerably from the Lahu Shi of the A-do-a-ga and Na Tawn clans of Burma. They are perhaps the newest comers of all the hilltribes represented in Thailand. Their immediate previous residences are in southern Kengtung State of Burma. Many centuries before that, they came from an area east of the Mekhong river in Yunnan, China. Their origin, which is widely separated from the other Lahu groups, might be described as the area southwest of S’su Mao at a latitude of 22°30' and longitude 101°0' in Yunnan Province, China. The Lahu Shi migrated into areas west and south of Kengtung, Burma, as a result of persecution by the Chinese and have lived in Burma for centuries.

Linguistically, the Lahu Shi are not mutually intelligible to other Lahu, but there are many similarities in social and physical aspects. It would be difficult to guess that the Lahu Shi have come from China. They do not retain any of the typical Chinese social characteristics that might be expected, doing away even with the custom of burning joss-sticks. In Burma, the Ba Lan clans have come closer to the Lahu Na and use a form of both languages which is mutually intelligible to each other.

Location: There are only three Lahu Shi villages in Thailand, two of them in Chiengrai and one in the northernmost tip of Chiengmai province.

Population: The three villages have a total of 75 houses and about 650 people. More than half of these people have arrived since 1959.

Language: A Tibeto-Burman language similar in sound and form to that of the Lahu Na and the Akha. Many Lahu Shi speak an accented, but fluent Lahu Na and Yunnanese, and some of them speak Shan quite well and understand Lao-Thai. Although many Burma Lahu Shi are literate in the missionary script, none of Thailand’s Lahu Shi are literate in any language.

Religion: The Lahu Shi in Thailand are all theistic animists who do not burn either joss-sticks or beeswax candles as do other Lahu groups. They tend, however, to mix with the Lahu Nyi in every
other respect, including a nominal affiliation with the present Lahu Nyi "man god". They have a strong conception of a "Creator God" and heaven and hell, but unlike the Lahu Nyi, do not consider any sins to be unpardonable if the spirits are properly propitiated with sacrifices and lamentations. This has made the Lahu Shi a less moral and lawful people than their related Lahu groups.

The "paw khu" (or religious leader) practices many forms of exorcistic shamans and usually claims to have strong "voodoo" powers that are feared by the people. They use secret sayings and have an ability to work themselves into fearful, trancelike states while "driving away" or "seeking out" an evil spirit. It is the "paw khu's" job to accept a pig or chicken from those who would like to have their sins removed and sacrifice it to the spirits at the edge of the village. Altars and nat shrines are built at the head of the village to "keep the good spirits".

Villages: There is not as yet what might be called a typical Lahu Shi village in Thailand since they are all new sites. However, there are no differences in their villages from that of the Lahu Na or Lahu Shi, except in location, which is on lower elevations (3000 ft.) than that of the other Lahu. They tend typically to live on lower elevations than other Lahu tribes.

Physical Description: Comparatively, the Lahu Shi are the lightest-complexioned of the Lahu group and a very handsome people. Their women are considered by the other tribes as being among the most beautiful. They are a stocky, well-proportioned people, somewhat shorter than the Lahu Na (men about 5' 5''). The general health in Lahu Shi villages is good and there is a greater degree of cleanliness about them than the other Lahu. They have no serious or contagious diseases as a rule and venereal diseases are unheard of. They seldom chew betel nut or smoke opium.

Lahu Shi men are aggressive and quick-tempered and are renowned as fierce fighters. Among the Lahu there is a saying, "where there is trouble, there'll be a Lahu Shi". They are quick with their knives and are expert sword fighters.

The women wear very short blouses, opening at the front, and having, very little embroidery or silver ornaments. The blouses are usually shorter in front, exposing the navel, and made of homespun material of a dirty-white color. The skirts are as plain and of the
same light-colored material. The men do not consistently wear their homespun clothing, but wear clothing bought in the Shan or Thai markets or from travelling merchants.

**Economy:** As newcomers, the Lahu Shi in Thailand are not yet well established, but they are practicing the agricultural and other economic systems that the Lahu Nyi and Lahu Na around them follow. This is the slash-and-burn hoe cultivation with emphasis upon opium as the chief cash crop. They are energetic, although somewhat unstable farmer, and should soon reach at least the same economic status as that of their Lahu Na neighbors. In addition to being ambitious hog raisers, the Lahu Shi are attempting to build up small herds of cattle and buffaloes.

**Contact:** The Lahu Shi are not timid people by any means and do not hesitate to make contacts with other tribes, and the people of the lower regions. Indeed, they are usually the ones to take the initiative, but have difficulties in establishing regular contacts for trade purposes because of their unpredictable temperaments. In Burma, they have managed to deal mutually with the Shans and other Lahus who have had long experience in such relationships. In Thailand, the Lahu Shi are still going through a period of adjustment and are more concerned with village-building and familiarization of new lands.

**Social Customs:** While most of the social customs are identical with the Lahu Na, there are no “purification” dances like that of the Lahu Nyi. They are as adept at playing the reed-and-gourd pipes as the Lahu Na and are great singers and dancers. Dances are conducted mostly during New Year celebrations.

In addition to the rough game of top-fighting that the men and boys play, the younger men often engage themselves in wrestling and kick-fights for sport. The wrestling is a sort of judo, involving various techniques in throwing the opponent off balance by leg and arm work. The kick-fights are even rougher, games often ending in lost tempers and subsequently in injuries. The objective is to disable the opponent by well-placed kicks to the thighs and a rearward thrusting with the heels in a jump kick. An injured man is never pitied, but laughed at with great glee, as though it was a good joke. This characteristic is not only true for the Lahu Shi, but most hill-people consider it a fine joke to see a person fall or hurt himself, remarking that, “he has not yet learned to walk or take care of himself, and is like a small baby”.
The Lahu Shi are a monogamous people, but rather immoral and divorces are not infrequent. There are unscrupulous young "po" or warriors who make it a practice to go from village to village to visit the girls, enticing them away with false promises, then throwing them out. Whoever challenges these rogues will be asking for trouble, but a fight is never refused by Lahu Shi men, who must uphold their honor. In addition, they are not cowards by any means.

**Village Government:** Thailand's Lahu Shi villages have chieftains who had been previously appointed by the elders of their particular villages before coming to Thailand, and continue to use this custom in chief selection. The chief must be a wise and elderly man with a reputation of having been a great "po". He must make most of the decisions but is helped by the elders, and in matters of religion, he must ask the "paw khu" for the right decision. Drastic punishment is uncommon for their own people, but an enemy or robber can expect no mercy at the hands of a Lahu Shi Chief. The Chief himself would undoubtedly remove the man's hands, then his head.

Petty crimes are punished with fines, or, in the event that a young man objects to the Chief's orders, he will face a strong "po" in a serious kick-fight. If he wins the fight, he will be promoted, but if he loses, (and inevitably he does) he will suffer further humiliations by the mocking and taunting of the villagers.

**Trends:** The Lahu Shi appear to have serious intentions to remain in Thailand, and there are indications that more of their people might join them from Burma. Having come from areas in Burma that have become over-populated, the Lahu Shi in Thailand probably are the first of many more that will later attempt to come. Thailand's hill population is very much less than that of Burma and Laos, so that it is a natural economic course for the Lahu Shi. The unrest in Burma is not cause enough for the Lahu Shi to leave their old homes; they would be the last to leave for reasons of political difficulty or fighting.
THE LISU
(LISSAW, LIshaw)

Affiliation: Thailand's Lisu are a Tibeto-Burman people of Lo-Lo extraction who come from regions in the upper reaches of the Salween Valley. Of the several Lisu sub-divisions represented in Burma, the Lisu in this country are affiliated with the "H'us" or "Flowery" Lisu and have linguistic differences with the "Pai" and the "Black" Lisu of Burma. Their name for themselves is "Lisu", being called "Lishaw" or "Lissaw" and "Hkeh-Lissaw" by the Thai. There are some ties with the Lahu and the Akha linguistically and in their social customs. Earlier origins are similar to that of the Akha, already described.

Location: The main concentration of Lisu are to be found in Chiangmai Province, in Amphurs Chiangdao and Mae Taeng. Lesser numbers are found in Chiangrai and on the eastern edges of Mae Hongson Province. The few villages that had moved south into Tak Province have almost all returned to parts of Chiangmai and only one village remains (in 1960) in Tak. The Lisu formerly living in Muang Fang on the Doi Phahom Phok (Muang Ang Khang) have moved into Amphur Chiangdao, leaving only a small village at Doi Pha Luang.

Population: There are in 1961, at least 17,300 Lisu in Thailand, based on 39 known villages, which average 37 houses per village and 12 persons per house. The Lisu have the highest rate of houses per village and household membership of Thailand's northern hill-tribes.

Language: A Tibeto-Burma language related to the Lo-Lo dialects, with six tones. Their only written script is a new English alphabet introduced by missionaries in Burma and China. The language is a difficult one to master since there are many different sounds as well as forms.

The Lisu men are remarkable linguists, sometimes speaking as many as four additional languages. Most of Thailand's Lisu men are fluent in at least Lahu and Yunnanese, and often fluent in Shan, Lao-Thai and Akha, although none of them are literate in any language.
Lisu girls at New Year's Time (Doi SamMecn, Chiangmai)

Lisu boys dressed for courtship

Lisu village (Na Lao, Chiangdao)

An elderly Lisu woman
Religion: All of Thailand’s Lisu are animists who practice certain forms of ancestor worship and exorcism. They believe that the world is full of spirits which are both good and bad, yet capable only of wrath, if offended. The religious practices are designed more to appease offended spirits than to invoke blessings, and the main objective of the Lisu in daily life is to be “unseen”, or to keep away from the spirits’ attention. The religious leader is called “mao hpi” who performs shamanistic rituals and ties wrist and neck cords on his people to ward off the harmful spirits. Attached to the neck cord are small amulets, which are put on after the “mao hpi” blows magic and recites incantations into them. The Lisu seldom practice “voodoo” witchcraft, but have involved exorcistic proceedings. There are no images or spirit houses, and a plain wooden plank is used in each house for the altar, called “ta-bea” on which small bowls of rice and water are placed to “raise” the spirits. At New Year’s celebration, corn liquor is also placed at the “ta-bea” together with joss sticks which are stuck into a mud ball.

The extent of ancestor worship does not go beyond reverence for the dead, with the placing of joss sticks at the grave, and killing of a pig each year next to the grave. The pig is then cooked and eaten at the grave where relatives may partake of the feast “together with the ancestors”.

The Lisu have many interpretations of the “attitudes” of the spirits, and are very superstitious about them. The water spirits are thought to be so easily offended that stream crossings near the villages must have small, enclosed bridges through which the traveller can pass, in order not to insult the spirits of the water. The spirits of the “hill and valleys” are said to be the most wrathful, sometimes “offended” by the dragging of a log, or the dislodging of a rock. Unusual occurrences, such as the accidental firing of a gun in a house, is thought to so anger the spirits that the house may have to be burned down, and a new location sought.

Villages: The Lisu tend to live on higher elevations than the Lahu and Akha, preferring ridge tops at 5000 feet or more. The Lisu choose village sites which might be disadvantageous to enemies should they wish to attack. Some of their villages are accessible only through a single route. This is perhaps a carry-over from their less peaceful existence in Northern Burma, where the Black Lisu to this day are noted for their aggressive spirit.
The Lisu formerly built their houses on the ground, in the manner of the Meo and Yao, but have given up this custom in increasing numbers to build homes upon wooden piles as the Lahu do. This has, however, failed to provide them the greater degree of sanitation that might be expected, although there is now less association with dog and hog lice. The bamboo-slat walls and floors, with thatchgrass roofing is identical with Lahu homes. The Lisu are more ambitious than the Lahu, and make rough fencing about the premises in order to keep the cattle from eating the roofing. There continue to be many families, often in the same village, who continue to live on the ground. These homes are built low to the ground, with a high threshold at the one door. The floor is hard-packed mud, and becomes quite clean when swept regularly. There is considerable dampness; the rain and at these higher elevations, the cold, keep the ground dwellers huddled up to the hearth for warmth. Chickens, pigs and dogs are always being ushered out of the door, but there is little regard for the filth that the livestock have left within the houses. The only advantage for the ground houses appears to be in the sturdiness of construction to withstand the strong winds. In terms of sanitation, both types have disadvantages simply because the Lisu do not consider it worthwhile to clean up their houses.

The Lisu keep considerable numbers of livestock which are tethered and corralled under the houses. They build rough pens for the pigs mainly to keep them from being taken by leopards and tigers at night. A visitor may be guaranteed a sleepless night in any Lisu village. There are noises of dogs, pigs and chickens, and ponies rub themselves against the pilings to vibrate the entire house. The very early-rising women and children have their own commotions to add to this.

Water supply is usually far from the village, and the fields are sometimes a day's journey away. The Lisu villages have large numbers of houses, averaging 37 houses but sometimes having over 100.

Physical Description: The Lisu are lighter-skinned than the Lahu, being about as fair as the typical Northern (Chiengmai) Thais, and their women may be considered very light brown in complexion. Lisu women have fine physical features and are considered to be the best-looking of the hilltribe women. They have an elegance and poise strikingly superior to the other tribes. The men are tall for hillmen, averaging about 5 feet 7 inches and of husky build.
The full dress of Lisu women is a complexity of striking designs and colorful cloth like the Yao (see section on Yao). They wear many layers of clothing, and their cumbersome dress has perhaps trained Lisu women to carry themselves with poise and erectness. Their silver ornaments cover the blouse in profusion, and an enormous turban graces the head. Loose pants which reach the ankles are worn instead of skirts and the long, knee-length blouse is drawn together at the waist by a long sash. Leggings are also worn as a daily dress item.

The men wear short, double-breasted jackets, loose knee-length pants and heavy turbans. Silver buttons are sewn onto the jackets and their fancy bags in various patterns. Lisu men generally carry a short dagger instead of the long knife as part of the daily accoutrement, and have fancy colorful leggings.

The Lisu are very energetic people, and nearly as much the avid hunters that the Lahu are. Their's is truly a society representing the "survival of the fittest", and few poor specimens among the adults are to be seen. They have many sicknesses but no venereal diseases, leprosy or yaws. There is an appallingly high death rate among the children, and, if they survive childhood, they have gone through many illnesses. There are comparatively fewer opium addicts among the older Lisu men (about 6%), but they are great drinkers of their strong corn liquor. They chew betel nut to excess and consider the darkened red mouths to be attractive.

Economy: The Lisu are second to none in their vigorous pursuance of opium culture. They rank with the Meo of the northern areas in the size of opium fields made per family, and realize the maximum income that is possible for mountain people under present conditions. They are also energetic hog keepers and plant considerable corn for livestock feed. However, they sell very few of their hogs, because of their customs of slaughtering most of the hogs for weddings, deaths, festivities and yearly ancestor worship. Increasing numbers of cattle are appearing around Lisu villages, and ponies or mules do much of the heavy packing. Before the opium season, millet, peppers, yams, melons and other vegetable crops are grown in sufficient quantities to feed the family. Every village keeps many chickens for home consumption, and there are goats in some of the villages. All crops are grown in highland fields, cleared and worked by slash-and-burn hoe cultivation methods.
Commodities sold to the plainspeople are limited to opium and some peppers and potatoes. Some Lisu have learned that rare orchids bring a good price among the Thai, and collect these in their spare time. Other jungle products sometimes sold include jungle herbs and the smoked meat of big game.

Lisu men are avid hunters using the crossbow very skillfully, and knowing potent poisons to use on their arrows. They invest eagerly in new guns with the cash they earn from opium. It is considered more important to buy another gun (or rifle if possible) than to buy shoes for themselves. The portion of cash income that is divided to the women is invested into more silver ornaments and clothing for themselves and the children. In each village, an individual sets himself up as the village blacksmith, and spends most of his time forging implements for members of the village. Despite the primitive forges, amazingly good knives and axes are made. A few blacksmiths are clever enough to make fairly good muzzle-loading guns.

Contact: While the Lisu generally view all outsiders with suspicion, there are considerable associations with members of other tribes, and they are bold enough to make frequent trips to Thai villages and towns. Occasionally a gang of Lisu might even be seen in a movie theater in Chiangmai, but a quick end comes of these visits when some man goes too far, and contracts venereal diseases, or some other sickness, while on such sprees in the city. Thereafter, the same clan may not visit the city again until they can be convinced that the "evil spirits" will not strike again. Frequent contacts with other tribes has given the Lisu many additional languages and a more progressive attitude. In many Lisu villages there are members of the Yunnanese Hax, who invariably marry a Lisu woman and settle down to more or less hold the economic purse strings of the village. Since it is to these individuals' benefit to keep outsiders away, they are often the reason for hostile attitudes that are often characteristic of Lisu villages.

Social Customs: New Year (Chinese) is the big occasion for the Lisu, and elaborate preparations, slaughtering of pigs and full dress is called for. The Lisu from other villages call on their neighbors to dance and feast, and most important, to court the girls. This merry-making continues for four to six days, during which the older men remain drunk most of the time on the corn whiskey. A special
day to remember and pay homage to the dead ancestors (the distinguished deceased only) is observed, and pigs are taken to the graves for slaughter there. Other occasions calling for pig-slaughtering include weddings, funerals, and exorcistic rituals.

Lisu custom has it that the young people must “meet at the rice pounders” for the initial stage of their courtship. This is the big rendezvous point, and much giggling and laughter will be heard at the rice pounders during the New Year season’s nights. From there, the couples remove to the high-land fields to sing lovesongs, and to continue their love-making.

The Lisu dance is much less exhausting than the similar Lahu form, becoming a slow, monotonous cadence to the gourd pipe instruments, and a sort of fiddle. The women and girls are practically inactive, surrounding the men and boys who shuffle and stamp their heels in a circular motion. The music is a continuous repetition of a simple theme and there is none of the many variations used by the Lahu.

Weddings are usually performed during the New Year’s celebrations, but can be conducted any time of the year. While the fanciest dress is put on for this occasion, the ceremony itself is very simple, with the parents of the couple doing most of the official functions. Funerals are more elaborate and again call for full dress. The dead is placed in a shallow grave, heaped over into a sizable mound about five feet high. Upon this mound is placed a bunch of thatchgrass to represent the “hair” by which the spirits are to recognize the grave. Joss-sticks are burned for several days after the burial.

The children have few organized games, playing a sort of “tag” and making swings and seesaws. The rest of the time is spent romping about the villages, playing with bows and arrows or making mud images of animals. This childhood is all too short, since the children begin to work in the fields with their parents at a very early age.

Like the Lahu, the Lisu men are very handy with their cross-bows and shoot a good portion of the small game with them. They are also expert in snaring wild animals and birds and many men specialize in using decoy pheasants and quail to catch wild birds. They eat all wild game except wild cats and dogs.
Village Government: The former custom for Lisu was to respect hereditary chieftains, but this is now modified so that the village elders choose a new chieftain if they so desire. There is very little discord in Lisu villages over leadership, and strong clan loyalty keeps the villages large. If there are important decisions to be made, even the chief may not pass judgment until all of the elders have concurred. The "maw pi" or religious leader does not have the strong say that the Labu "paw kbu" has, since he is generally a younger man. The chieftain, however may act on his own discretion in matters of petty crimes and punishments, usually by setting a fine. His orders to his people in such cases are final and must be obeyed without question, especially in matters requiring quick decisions. If there is time to mull over a problem, the elders will be consulted.

The Lisu will and do conduct their own trials in matters calling for the death penalty to certain criminals, since they do not yet have much contact with government officials. It is a serious criminal offence to steal in the Lisu society, and in more serious cases this may be punishable by death. Execution by the sword is carried out by a warrior called upon by the chieftain. These are recognized warriors, men who have performed brave acts in the hunt or in inter-village feuds. The Lisu are rather prone to pick a fight with the Labu and other Lisu with whom they develop grudges. The most common grounds for inter-village feuding has been the deliberate theft of ponies from another village, in order to provoke a feud that has been brewing. These feuds have often ended in deaths, and a continued hostility remains in some areas. It cannot be said that the Lisu are a gentle people by nature, there is always a spark of unpredictable pugnaciousness about the men, especially the warriors.

Trends: In view of the abolition of opium cultivation in Thailand, the Lisu have become restless and very much concerned over their future. Unlike the Labu, who speak of running away from Thailand, without much thought as to where they might go the Lisu declare that Thailand has become their true homeland, and this is where they will live, come what may. They realize the importance of learning new agricultural occupations to supplant opium cultivation. They are, however, worried that a too abrupt enforcement of the ban to grow opium might mean trouble for their people with the law, so that many Lisu have planted their new opium fields in inaccessible spots. There has been more consolidation of Lisu clans
which had in the past been spread out over a much wider area. The trend is to live closer together in the general vicinity of Chiengdao--Mae Taeng--Pai area.

The Lisu of Thailand represent a completed immigration group, although the majority of them have been in Thailand less than fifty years. They came to Thailand in search of freedom from persecution, and having found this, have no intention of giving up their new happiness. They are a long way from their former homelands in Burma and no longer hold to old ties in that country. They are by nature and experience a fierce, brave people, but a reasonable people who cherish the opportunity to be able to live in peace and understanding in their newly adopted country of Thailand. There are no indications that these people will be assimilated by the Thai, nor would they ever consider moving into the valleys.
Affiliation: The Meo of Thailand can be subdivided into at least three distinct tribes, on the basis of linguistic differences and tribal names which they give themselves. There are, again, dress and slight linguistic differences within the “Blue” Meo, so that they have various designations as “flowery”, “black” and “striped” Meo by the Thai people, although these tribes may not necessarily be the same tribal groups as the Meo of China who have similar name designations. It would be, perhaps, more correct to take for a general classification the names that Thailand’s Meo give themselves, substituting the terms “blue” and “white” for the two main groups for purposes of convenience. The “Meo Dawk, Meo Lai, and Mao Dam” (Thai for flowery, striped and black Meo respectively) call themselves “H’moong Njua”, “H’moong” being the name that most Meo tribes call themselves. The “Meo Khao” (Thai for “White Meo”) call themselves “H’moong Deaw” and the third group, although very few in number, can best be called “Gua M’ba” Meo from their own name “H’moong Gua M’ba”, sometimes called “Arm-band Meo” from their dress styles. The term “Meo” or “Miao” comes from the Chinese name for these tribes meaning “sprouts” and used to be resented by the Meo.

The Meo have an involved and complicated origin in China, generally from the province of Kweichow and also from Yunnan, Hunan and Kwangsi. Their history dates back possibly some 4,000 years. If the early Chinese chronicles refer to the same Meo of today, these references would place the Meo at that time in Kiangsi and Hunan Provinces. There were many notable struggles between the Meo people and the ever encroaching Chinese who finally crushed the Meo about 800 B.C. and drove them into the mountains of the west and southwest sections of Kwiechow Province. From there, the Meo scattered, travelling hundreds of miles into southern Yunnan, Tongking, Burma, Laos, and in the last 50 years, into Northern Thailand.

The exact racial affiliations of the ancient Meo is not known. Some authors (Davies and Benedict) have attempted to group them with the Mon-Khmer, but such connections, if any, would certainly
Blue Meo mother and baby  
Blue Meo Chieftain  
A Blue Meo family  
Blue Meo couple at New Year's time
White Meo man working on an opium poppy

White Meo woman in festive dress

Comparison of dress—the two Meo girls on the left are White Meo—on the right is a White Meo girl.
be very remote. Since about 700 B.C. the Meo have mixed with the Chinese, so that physically and linguistically they show strong connections and influence. However, the Meo, together with the Yao, remain as racial groups whose wider affiliations need further study and clarification.

The three main subdivisions of Meo in Thailand are treated here together because of their socio-economic similarities, despite their distinctive linguistic and dress differences. Their immigrations into Thailand have been mostly from Laos, through northern Nan, and the eastern borders of Chiangrai Province, and including all three main subdivisions of Meo. Another entrance has been through northern Chiangmai Province from Burma, involving various clans of the Blue Meo, who call themselves the same name as the Blue Meo from Laos, the "H'moong Njua". While their background of long separation corresponds to that of the Lahu Na and Lahu Nyi (from common origins, but coming to Thailand through Laos and Burma), it is interesting to note that the Blue Meo had retained more of their original characteristics than did the Lahu, perhaps to the extent of not having changed appreciably from their original linguistic differences already established before their immigration from southern China. It should be kept in mind that the Meo people have come from many divisions within their race, with as many different dialects, and that the relatively smaller number of Meo represented in Thailand can still be easily confused among their tribal groups for good reasons.

**Location:** The Blue Meo are located along the border areas of Nan and Chiangrai Provinces, in southern Tak, in Prae, in northern Petchaboon and Pitsanuloke, and a few villages in Chiangmai and Loey Provinces. The White Meo are mostly in Nan and Chiangrai Provinces, with other clans in Tak and Prae. The few Gua M'ba are found only in northern Nan Province and have steadily been absorbed by the Blue Meo communities. The Blue Meo of Chiangmai Province are groups that have come from Burma, and have, so far, remained within the province of Chiangmai, from Amphur Fang along the mountain ranges to locations south in the Doi Inthanon area.

**Population:** The Meo of all tribes number at least 45,000 in Thailand. This estimate is a conservative one based on the following known villages:
Blue Meo: 93 villages, average 35 houses per village, 8.0 persons per house 26,400
White Meo: 69 villages, average 35 houses per village 8.0 persons per house 19,200
Gua M'ba: 2 villages, average 10 or more houses per village 10.0 persons per house 200
Total population 45,800

Elsewhere, in South China, Tonkin and Laos, the Meo number at least five million in population.

Language: The Meo of the three subdivisions in Thailand speak a tonal language of strong Chinese influence. The various dialects are either mutually intelligible to one another or range to considerable differences. The Meo language which belongs to the Yao-Meo-Pateng groups, has never been truly established as being affiliated to any other known languages. Among all the Meo, there are many older men who speak Yunnanese fluently. Most Meo men are able to speak Lao-Thai, and a few in the more southern areas understand Thai. Among the Chiengmai Meo, Shan is an important second language. The Meo are illiterate on the whole; however, some of their young people are learning to read and write Thai through the Border Police school systems and missionary efforts. There are claims that ancient Meo had a written language like Chinese, but this is no longer known to Thailand's Meo.

Religion: Almost all of Thailand's Meo are strictly animists who have retained some of the Chinese religious customs that they had adopted before coming to Thailand. A few, about 100 people, are Christians. Meo animism has many ritualisms in its practice, and actual beliefs are limited to that of the existence of good and evil spirits (animism), and the "three souls" concept. Importance is placed in the reverence for notable dead ancestors and rituals for departing souls. They do not actually worship their dead ancestors or any divine beings, and have no temples or images. They believe in a "Creator" or "Sau", who is said to have taught the Meo people all that they know, including the cultivation of the opium. This legendary figure had somehow died and, in any event, was never worshipped as God.

A person is believed to have three souls, which upon death, separate, one to go to a sort of heaven or the "abode of the dead", one to remain at the grave, and one to become re-embodied again.
There is much ado concerning the "farewell" to the dead and dying. The departing soul must be shown the right "roads" to take to reach heaven, and the "answers" that must be given to various persons that will be met "on the road to heaven", since some of these will be evil spirits disguised to deceive the soul. Some of the Meo insist that special cloth and cord shoes, made in China, be placed upon the feet of the dead to insure that the souls reach the abode of the ancestors. These funeral ceremonies vary according to tribe or clan but generally, a similar period of exorcising the evil spirits from the dead before burial is important to them all. This is believed to protect both the living and the dying from influences of the evil spirits. For this purpose a chicken or a pig will be killed, later to be eaten by guests who are not members of the deceased's family. The practice of sacrificing livestock for the dead is somewhat similar to practices of the Lisu, with the participants later eating the killed animals. Small mounds are made over the shallow graves, after all the rituals have been performed by the exorcist. There is no belief in a hell as such, and the worst that can happen to the wicked dead, or persons who did not receive proper final rites, is that their "spirits of the grave" will haunt the relations, and the third spirits might become re-embodied into a wretched creature.

The Meo are great believers in witches and demons. They believe that witches can cast spells and evil upon people, or turn themselves into a sort of werewolf (also believed by the Lahu, Lisu, Yao, Akha, and some Karen circles) which will attack sick people and babies. An exorcist who has learned the various incantations and sayings can practically make a living in a Meo village by "driving away" evil spirits which are supposed to be responsible for the various difficulties.

Villages: The Meo prefer the highest mountain tops for their village sites, living on elevations over 5,000 feet and higher, when the terrain permits. The village site is usually just off the summits, on inclines or ridges. They like to select village sites to which the water supply might be brought in by bamboo troughs, and where such water systems can be constructed, much labor is saved. The village itself, however, may develop numerous mud holes and water collections from the overflow, and in these the pigs wallow, spreading mud all around the village.

The houses are sturdily constructed, on the ground, with split wooden planks for walls, and thatch grass or leaf roofs. The
Meo tend to remain longer at a village site than most other hilltribes, sometimes for more than 15 years before moving to a new site. Their houses are often quite large, although an average of 8 people make up the household. The front section of the homes are partitioned off into a general working and guest section, with a hearth and built-up mud stoves for cooking pig food. Sometimes their stone meal grinders, operated by hand cranking, are placed in this section together with an assortment of pack saddles and various implements and stores. The rear sections are partitioned off into sleeping quarters for the family.

The average size of Meo villages in Thailand today is about 35 houses which are clustered together in rather close proximity to each other. The largest house is usually that of the headman, and is located generally in the center of each village. Substantial stalls are built up against the houses for the ponies and mules, with hog pens and chicken coops set up away from the houses.

**Physical Description**: The three tribes of Meo in Thailand differ considerably in dress, but they can be recognized readily on this basis. There are variations within each main tribal group, usually as a result of the Meo tendency to adopt ornamental or embroidered designs from the Yao. Typically, the two main divisions of the Blue and the White Meo differ most in the women’s dress. The Blue Meo women wear dark blue and white pleated skirts with embroidered borders and a long black apron which covers the front only. The White Meo women usually wear blue pants and shorter blue and black aprons which cover front and back. They sometimes instead, wear a pleated skirt, which is plain and white. The embroidered collars of their blue blouse hang like a sailor’s collar at the back and these are smaller on the Blue Meo women than those worn by the White Meo. Turbans are worn as every day dress only by the White Meo women. The women of both tribes wear leggings or gaiters of blue, black or white, and sashes which are usually embroidered for White Meo, and red-colored for Blue Meo women. The Blue Meo women fix their hair in a bun on top, with a strip of checked or striped cloth around the base of it, but no turbans, except on festive occasions. In gala dress, the White Meo women fix huge turbans of many small strips with silver ornaments along the top fringes. The women of both tribes wear neck rings of silver in small closed rings which get progressively larger. This is also true for men of the White Meo, but Blue Meo men, and some of their women wear looser neck rings as a rule.
The main differences between the men of these two tribes are the longer jackets, and lower crotches of the pants in the Blue Meo. Shorter jackets, which expose the abdomen, and higher pants crotches are worn by the White Meo men. These jackets and pants are of a blue-black color. The skull cap is worn optionally by all Meo men. On festive occasions, more silver ornaments are worn, with differences in styles according to locations or particular tastes. The men may be equally fancy at times as the women. A short colored sash is sometimes worn with the ends hanging in front. The women will use many silver ornaments on their dresses for gala occasions, and always keep the neck rings on, even while working. There are many other optional dress details for both sexes. Compared to some other tribes, the Meo are more easily distinguished by their distinct and unique dress.

In physical features, the Meo appear very "Chinese" and only a shade darker in complexion. They are a sturdy, handsome people on the whole. The men are generally tall (5'7") and wiry, as hill-men go, and the women are also of fine sturdy build. There are certainly some very beautiful women among the Meo, having an elegance and carriage which is most impressive. They are generally quite bashful before strangers, and will hide from them in their houses. Aside from the high numbers of Meo who become addicted to opium (about 12%), they are a clean-living, healthy people, who do not chew betel nut as a rule. The women seem to have a way of simply "gliding" up the steepest mountain slopes without showing any fatigue. The main disease to be found among the Meo is malaria. Venereal disease is rare.

Economy: Among the hilltribes of Thailand, the Meo people by and large enjoy being in the "upper income" group, and not from opium alone, or always from opium. While they have been the most vigorous growers of the poppy, many Meo clans have left opium cultivation altogether, but have nonetheless demonstrated remarkable abilities to grow other cash crops. A classic example will be seen in the Meo groups living northeast of Pitsanuloke, which have an even higher income from selling swine and other livestock. These people do not depend upon opium at all. They are, however, exceptional examples, owing much of their progress to the influence of Christian missionaries. The vast majority are still poppy growers, especially in the more remote areas.

The Meo are great animal husbandrymen, keeping many ponies, hogs, goats and, in some areas, mules. They feed their live-
stock well and know how to mix rations to increase the nutritive value. Increasingly more cattle are appearing in their settlements and some Meo also keep buffaloes. Every village keeps many chickens.

The Meo and Yao (see next chapter) are surpassed only by the Yunnanese Haw in the comparative progressiveness in their agricultural practices in Thailand's mountains. The Meo of Thai land have skills in animal husbandry far superior to that of such tribes as the Labu, Lisu or Akha previously described. They build substantial pens for their hogs, good pony and mule sheds and corrals, chicken coops, and know how to develop good herds of goats. They are skilled at making good hoes, axes and working knives, and fashion their own millstones. Some of the Meo have harnessed water power to run these milling stones and operate rice pounders in an ingenious fashion. They not only trough water into their villages from the springs but use this system to irrigate gardens as well. The idea of using ploughs is still new among the hilltribes, and is used only by the Haw (see Haw), but like the Haw, some of the Meo in the northern areas grow buckwheat for food and livestock feed. They are always eager to acquire new ideas and skills.

Other crops grown include corn, millet, sugar cane, melons, pumpkins, potatoes, yam, flax, tobacco, mustard greens, other vegetables and some fruit trees. There is a system of alternating crops so that the Meo have sufficient food to eat the year round, without having to depend on the jungles. Most of the men like to hunt wild game, but do this more for sport and pastime than as a necessity. When the Meo are going on visits to the towns of the valleys, they do not miss any opportunities to pick up orchids and other jungle plants that they know will bring a price from the plains-people. Where the Meo have been settled for any length of time, it might be said that they are self-sufficient except for "luxury" items and for salt and steel which come from the plains.

Among themselves, the Meo have a brisk trade going on all the time. Some are specialists in blacksmithing, cloth-designing, saddle-making, millstone-chipper, makers of wooden fixtures, and even gun-makers and repairers. They generally trade their goods and favors, or pay each other in quantities of opium, rice or other foodstuffs in suitable portions. This self-sufficiency exists despite a high rate of opium addiction among the men which lowers their output considerably. Addicts are usually older men with two or three wives who support them practically in every way.
Contact: The Meo may be seen frequently in and about the northern cities and towns, buying such luxury items as medicines, cloth, silver and other fancy items, or dickering for steel bars and lead for shot. It is amusing to watch Meo people who have just purchased a new tooth-brush and toothpaste, or some fragrant cosmetics, trying these items out in the middle of the market. They do not hesitate to voice their opinions if they are not completely satisfied.

Comparatively, the Meo are bold and quick to do business with the people of the valleys and at the same time good enough business men that they are not easily cheated. They have many contacts with plainsmen who come to their villages with various wares, and if they have opium to sell, they trade through such visitors rather than risk arrest by taking their opium down to the towns. In addition, their contact with other hilltribes around them is usually good, and they are able to live in harmony with other people without becoming overly sociable with anyone who is not of their tribe.

The Meo in a few areas have responded favorably to schooling introduced by the Thai Border Police, and the young people are beginning to learn Thai admirably well. Taken as a whole, there is perhaps more of a yearning for education among the Meo than among the other hill peoples, if for no other reason than that they are a business-minded people who see many good advantages through education.

Social Customs: The Meo are a gay people at festivities or events which call for social gatherings. At New Year's time, all the people dress in their best finery and there is much singing, blowing of the reed pipes, feasting and dancing. Funerals and weddings call for much celebration, and considerable corn liquor will be consumed by all the adults. The men become quite noisy and obnoxious when drunk, but most of the women who might have imbibed too much will hide and quietly pass their drunkenness off. The children play a sort of tag and other games, chasing each other about the village, and the older teenagers will spend a time of courting and singing lovesongs.

The Meo, like the Yao, are usually very hospitable people. Visitors at their villages are given the best accommodations possible and usually fed very well. They will not hesitate to break out the whiskey which has been fermenting for months, and love to sit around until late in the night asking questions and carrying on conversation. Women almost never participate in such social visits with strangers, retiring early and getting up long before daybreak to begin the numerous daily chores.
Village Government: Because of their contacts with the plains-people, there are closer associations with Amphur and Tambol officials, so that most of the Meo have legally instated headmen. They are a people much given to frequent litigation with one another and especially with rival clans, almost to the point of keeping some hot lawsuit in process at all times. Usually these cases are very trivial, but nevertheless long discussions and grand speeches are called for. As yet, few Meo take their more serious cases to the Amphur officials or to the police, tending to settle everything “in their own courts”. The village headman and elders decide all issues that do not come to the attention of Changwad and Amphur officials, imposing fines and sometimes a beating to the guilty person. The death penalty has not been reported among the Meo, but they have, on occasions, taken drastic measures to follow up robbers and bandits to settle scores on their own. In Thailand, Meo leadership is invariably chosen by their own elders rather than on hereditary basis, and most of these chiefs have reported to Amphur offices. There are a few Meo leaders who are recognized by the Amphurs as Kamnan, or circle headmen.

Trends: The Meo are rather stable hillpeople who do not move their village sites often, remaining from 10 to 15 years or more in the same close locality. However, when they do move, they move long distances in search of a more satisfactory new location. Sometimes these movements are return trips to previous areas, but usually new sites and surroundings are sought. There is a tendency to swap general localities with other Meo, e.g. the Meo from the Doi Inthanon area (South Chiangmai Province) recently moved to areas in Amphur Prao (North Chiangmai), and Meo from Mae Taeng (north) moved back down to the Doi Kham mountains (south) in Amphur Haet. Their movements are at present strictly internal, with no significant immigrations or emigrations into and from Thailand, although it would be difficult to predict how the Laos political situation might effect the Meo of Nan Province.

There are certainly no signs of the Meo becoming absorbed in any way by the Thai people or other tribes. They continue to have very strong bonds of solidarity and tight clans. There are a few Meo communities reported to have taken up wet cultivation practices in northern Nan Province, utilizing high plateau lands for this purpose. However, the Meo could not be easily persuaded to leave their mountain homes.
A group of Yao

Yao maidens

Yao boys with special hoes
Yao woman in daily dress

A 7-year-old Yao girl

A family hoeing opium field following a corn crop

A Yao man
THE YAO
(HIKEH YAO, MAN)

Affiliation: The Yao, together with the Meo, form two groups of the Yao-Meo-Pateng peoples, whose wider linguistic affiliations yet needs study. Their origin is roughly in Kweichow Province of China, from whence the Meo also came. They are as ancient a people as the Meo and the Lo-Lo, or forefathers of the Lisu and Akha, becoming more or less established into their ethnic divisions some 2500 years ago. They are perhaps the same as the Yao-Ren, mentioned in ancient Chinese chronicles, being at that time, a barbaric people called “dog” by the Chinese. They remain in southern China in large numbers, especially in Kwangsi Province, and have been migrating for centuries into southern Yunnan, Tongking, Laos and Thailand. They have undergone the same strong exposure to Chinese influences as the Meo, perhaps having intermarried to great extents with the conquering Chinese soldiers since the times of the earliest kings of the Chow dynasty. The Yao of today has strong “Chinese” features, and in Thailand, they represent a single homogeneous tribe which is well separated linguistically from all other hilltribes.

Location: Earlier reports have placed the main concentrations of Yao in northern Nan Province, but they are today more numerous in eastern and northern Chiengrai Province. Only about 7% of the total Yao population remain in northern Nan. They are found only in these two provinces of Thailand in significant numbers, with only a few villages in Amphur Fang, Chiengmai.

Population: There are 74 Yao villages known, with an average of 15 houses per village and 8.5 persons per household. The total population for 1960 is estimated at 10,200 Yao in Thailand.

Language: The Yao language is more closely related to the Meo language than any other, but the two are completely different as far as mutual inter-intelligence is concerned. It is a tonal language, strongly influenced by Chinese. Actual affiliations of the Yao language have yet to be definitely established. They have no alphabet of their own, but some or the men use Chinese characters to write their own language.

The Yao in the northern areas of Chiengrai (Amphur Mae Chan) have almost all come from the Nam Tha district of Laos.
where they were closely associated with the Lahu Na. They are therefore all quite fluent in Lahu, as well as Yunnanese and Lao-Thai. This group of Yao have remarkable linguistic abilities, so that it is strange that the Yao in Nan and in western Chiangrai do not show the same affinity for languages. The Yao of Nan speak the Lao-Thai poorly, as compared to their northern brothers, and most of them do not understand Yunnanese (this is also true for the Meo in Nan). There are individuals in the north who can speak Akha and Lisu, and a few have learned Thai. There is a missionary English and Thai script being taught to the Yao and a few of them have become literate in it. Very few of them can use Chinese characters.

Religion: The Yao are animists, who, like the Meo, practice various rituals which have been adopted from the Chinese. They place importance on ancestor reverence and make sacrifices to them, although their spirits are not worshipped. The only other religion to have reached the Yao is Christianity, but there are less than 200 Yao who are now professing Christians.

The Yao, by and large, are not as involved with their various religious customs as are the Meo, but have similar rituals concerning departing souls, and exorcistic practices which are designed to remove bad spirits from the dying as well as the living. There are family altars at which routine offerings are made to guardian spirits and joss-sticks are burned there. Sacrifices of pigs and chickens are made to the spirits of ancestors once a year as well as at the time of a death or sickness. There are no images or temples.

Villages: The Yao live at lower elevations than the Meo or Lisu. Their villages are often located along stream heads at elevations of 3000 to 3500 feet and average about 15 houses. They have become more permanent in recent years and have been known to remain in one general area for 10-15 years. The smaller villages and hamlets move more frequently.

The houses are built on the ground like those of the Meo, and have thatchgrass roofs, with bamboo slat or split wood walls. They are large and roomy dwellings with two or more partitioned sections. The front sections of the houses are used for working and quartering guests, with a fire hearth in the middle of each section.

The Yao like to be near a source of water which can be brought into their houses by bamboo troughs and spilled into large wooden troughs at one end of the house. They will hook up rice-pounders on faster-flowing streams, and use it to irrigate small
gardens by each home. Generally, their villages are kept cleaner than those of most other hilltribes.

**Physical Description:** The Yao are one of the “Yellow” race, quite “Chinese” in appearance, or showing strong mongoloid features. They are as fair-complexioned as the Meo, and nearly as light-skinned as the Chinese. They enjoy comparatively good health and sanitary conditions, bathing daily and keeping neat, clean clothes on most of the time. Since they, like the Meo, associate more with the people of the valleys, venereal and other diseases are not unheard of and malaria is common. Some 5-8% of the total population are opium addicts, a much lower proportion than the Meo.

Yao women wear blue, homespun pants with very elaborate embroidery in cross patterns of white, red and yellow designs. They wear a heavy gown which divides into four tails at the waist and reaches the ankles. The gown is trimmed with distinctive red cotton fluffs, which are attached to the collar and go down the front of the blouse to the waist, giving the appearance of a lei. A heavy blue-black sash is worn around the middle over the gown, and neat, blue-black turbans are worn which have embroidered designs on the ends. They wear earrings and a single neck ring. The wedding headdress of Yao women is very elaborate and spreads over the large turban like a triangular canopy.

The men dress very plainly in comparison, wearing a loose jacket which fastens to one side at the neck, and loose trousers of blue-black material. They may have a few silver buttons and embroidered hems. The head is usually bare, but those men who have acquired felt berets from the towns will wear them constantly. They have a cloth skull cap, but these are worn more by the younger boys than by the men.

**Economy:** The Yao are industrious hill farmers who have a constant agricultural program going on year round. Their principal cash crop is opium, with considerable yearly sales of hogs and cattle to add to this. Their earning ability is higher than all other hilltribes with the exception of the few Yunnanese Hau, who earn more from trading. The Yao, on the whole, plant more poppies and know more about the cultivation of opium than other hilltribes. They put in the same enthusiasm in their animal husbandry as do the Meo. In addition, they are shrewd businessmen.

The Yao in the Chiangrai area have learned specialized skills which they have acquired from the Thai people, such as ricepaper-making and silver-smithing. Their blacksmiths make excellent hoes,
axes, and other implements and a type of muzzle-loading shotgun that has admirable power and accuracy. The women are skilled with the needle and produce beautiful embroidery work. These and other activities make brisk intra-village trade which is extended to neighboring villages. Payments are usually made in either cash or through trade of opium and foodstuffs.

They grow sufficient quantities of crops and vegetables to meet their needs, as well as having sufficient corn to feed their pigs. The Yao keep fine-looking cattle, hogs, ponies, chickens, ducks and in some areas, buffaloes. Their hog herds are the most impressive, in terms of numbers and the selected breeding that is sometimes practiced, so that more improved types of hogs are to be seen. Fences are built around the houses and substantial stalls and pens made for the livestock.

**Contact:** Through bold and aggressive contacts with other tribes and the Thai people, the Yao are more advanced as hill tribes go. Their men often know their way around the towns and cities, dressing like the local people, and passing for such. They are very hospitable people and entertain visitors frequently in their villages. The villages are also within reasonable access to Thai traders and buyers, being on elevations of 3,000 feet or so. Their commerce includes contacts with people of every race living near them, and because they are, by and large, a friendly people, such contacts are continually encouraged.

Intermarriage with other tribes is very rare, despite the care-free attitudes many Yao circles have concerning courtship and marriage. It is quite common to see members of Lahu tribes who have sought refuge in Yao villages, living with the Yao and working for them. The Yao keep a cautious but active trade relationship with Yunnanese, who travel in and out of their villages, but very rarely allow them to settle with them (as the Lisu quite often do).

**Social Customs:** The Yao of Thailand have an unusual custom in the courtship of their young people. While a Yao girl is very expensive to marry, (thousands of Baht or many pigs to the parents) a young man is understandably discouraged further from marrying in view of the very free customs of premarital sex relations. An eligible young woman must keep two beds, one for herself and the other for a suitor, or her parents might be embarrassed that their child lacked training in etiquette. Should the young woman become pregnant, and yet the young man refuses marriage, the incident is not regretted, and the new child is gratefully received by the girl's parents. According to custom, the young man then must pay a
token fine (seven silver rupee coins or the equivalent in Baht) and he is properly and quickly excused. He would need to pay much more if he decided to marry the girl. There are, however, modifications and exceptions taken in this very common case, and the influence of the parents has much to do with the final decisions, when the man involved is one of the villagers. Most outsiders, especially the Chinese, are not eligible to court the Yao girls.

The Yao observe weddings, funerals and New Year's with great enthusiasm, dressing in their best fineries and doing much feasting and drinking. They are not given to song and dance, although they do have a casual form of dancing as well as songs. They enjoy telling tales and folk stories, and the main event of each day is the time of visiting each other in their homes for this purpose. They drink great quantities of green tea (usually plucked from the wild trees) and smoke the water pipes (tobacco) at such times, as well as during the day when there is leisure time. They never chew the betel nut nor do they drink liquor frequently, and only the older men might become addicted to opium. Many men actually smoke opium, but few of them really become addicted to the drug.

Village Government: A Yao chieftain is selected by the elders of the village mainly for his intelligence, and usually out of respect for age and experience. They are a peaceful people but have a similar desire for litigations that the Meo have. At such times there are better opportunities to make lengthy speeches, and the older men get a chance to show their greater knowledge and wisdom to the younger people. They do not maintain warriors or special men to enforce law and order, and generally settle disputes through the chief's decisions through fines that he might impose. They are very polite to each other and seldom have serious quarrels, but occasionally more serious difficulties arise between the Yao and another tribal group. In such cases, the Yao are slow to anger, but will follow up with drastic justice and retaliation. Very few legal cases ever reach the Amphurs, but very few cases involving the death sentence by their own judgment have been reported.

Trends: While many Yao have come from Laos as recently as 1956, there are relatively few of them coming into Thailand today. Their settlements have become more permanent than in the past and there are no significant numbers of Yao people moving out of their main areas today. They tend to relocate a village every ten years, but do not move long distances. A few Yao in Amphur Mae Chan, Chiangrai, have moved into the valleys and taken up wet rice cultivation, but these are exceptions.
THE LAWA
(LUWA, L'WA, L'VA)

(The author ventures his own opinions on the possible ethnic affiliations of the Lawa and related groups, from what he has learned during many years of living among the Wa people. His study of the Wa language and ethnic characteristics has helped him in making linguistic and physical comparisons between these peoples. In addition, he has had access to the Wa traditional accounts of themselves, which have been handed down from generation to generation. He has not, however, had an opportunity to consult physical anthropologists, or more recent ethnological monographs which may have much to add to resolving this puzzling segment of racial ethnogeny. He would, therefore, state his opinions with the sincere wish that such information might prove useful to other students of Southeast Asian ethnography.)

The Wa of Burma believe themselves to be the original and unchanged people of their race. This claim might be supported partially by considering that they have retained strong bonds of solidarity and a homogeniety in their large numbers. Rather than having lost their tribal traditions, the Wa have proudly held to them, and have probably changed little from what they might have been hundreds of years ago. Without any doubt in his mind, the Wa will relate how his people had come through Thailand, naming places that he could never have been to or seen. A great Wa Chieftain once told the author of a place, "in the far away Land of the Thai people," which was known as "Tak" (Rahaeng) to the Wa, and that he wished someday to make a journey there to worship at some symbolic stones, placed there by his ancestors "eighty generations" ago. He stated that, although he had never seen the place, he would recognize it at once, and know just where to find the stones. He could go by the vivid descriptions handed down for generations by his forefathers. In addition, he claimed that his people, and this is supported by all older Wa men, had journeyed, thousands of years ago, northwards along the river valley "which flows through Tak" (Mae Ping River), settling for a long time in what is now Chiangmai valley. Ruins that may be seen to this day on some remote mountain tops, of Chiangmai Province, were undoubtedly ancient Wa settlements, for, they claim, they had been very strong at one time, and had sizable cities. Surely the ancient "L'wa" mentioned in early Thai
A typical Lawa home in Baw Luang

A Lawa village

A Lawa Wat at Baw Luang, Amphur Haut, Chiengmai Province

A Lawa man
A Lawa man with his grandson

Lawa woman in tribal dress

Elderly Lawa man

Above same Lawa women as they appear in daily dress
chronicles were the true Wa, and the present day Lawa are isolated remnants of this race.

The typical facial features seen in the Wa of Burma, suggests a relationship to that of the Polynesians, and this same characteristic is one that the author has noted time and again among the Lawa, Htin, and Kha Mu. He has a feeling that he is again among the Wa when visiting these people, and the language has so many similarities that he is tempted to speak the Wa dialect with them, rather than the Lao-Thai that most of them know so well. These details are mentioned here in order to support those students who have already come forth with similar views.)

Affiliation: The Lawa of Northern Thailand represent a racial group quite separate from those tribes which have come from regions north of Thailand. Together with the Htin, Kha Mu, Kha Haw and possibly the rare "Phi Tong Luang", they are a Wa-related ethnic group whose origins (Austronesian) are from the south. Like the Meo and Yao, their wider ethnic and linguistic affiliations are difficult to trace and there remains some confusion in regard to their ancient migration routes. Most authorities have placed them, somewhat vaguely, as a Mon-Khmer group which has probably scattered northward from regions in the south of Thailand or Malaya or Cambodia. The exact origin of these tribes is yet to be definitely established. It is possible that their ancestors were of Polynesian-Micronesian stock. There are suggestions of the Austronesian or a slightly negroid feature in these people. Whatever their actual origin, it appears that these are Wa-related groups, who were undoubtedly the predecessors of the Thai peoples, and even the Mon-Khmers, over 2000 years ago. Linguistically, they are definitely related to the Wa of Northern Burma and Southern Yunnan, China, who had, according to tradition, lived in Thailand prior to their northward migrations. Their physical features and even the tribal dress suggests at once the Wa types, especially the Lawa of Northern Thailand. These Lawa are not to be confused with the so-called "Lawa" of Kanchanaburi Province or the Chaobon (also called "Lawa") of Petchaboon and Korat Provinces. Their relationships to the Chaobon is certainly remote, but the "Lawa" of Kanchanaburi are undoubtedly also of Wa ancestry.

Location: The Lawa are located within the regions of Mae Hong-sorn and Chiengmai Provinces, which lie between Mae Sariang and Baw Luang. They have settled within a rough circle, between Baw Luang (18°09', 96°22') in the east, to Mae Sariang in the west.
Those Lawa who had lived near Chiangmai city have been absorbed by the Thai people, and no longer retain their former ethnic identities. The Lawa of Baw Luang area have been in that same vicinity for hundreds of years.

Population: There are 43 known villages of Lawa, which number some 1300 or more households, averaging about 30 houses per village, and 7.0 persons per house. The total population is estimated at 9,000 persons (this may be a low estimate). The largest village is Baw Luang, in which there are 230 households. Few Lawa villages number less than 25 houses.

Language: As outlined above, the Lawa speak a language related to Wa, and use many of the same words. The author does not feel that this is one of the Mon-Khmer languages, nor is there anything more than remote Mon-Khmer influences, if any, in this language. It is a language, together with Wa, which perhaps deserves a separate classification. There are no clear indications to show linguistic influences which the Mon invaders of the 6th and 7th century A.D. might have had on the Lawa people.

Today, most of the Lawa are able to speak Lao-Thai fluently. Those Lawa, found on the Baw Luang plateau, and nearer to Mae Sariang, have been in close contact with the Thai people, so that many of the younger people have been to Thai schools. While some of them are literate in Thai, few of them can speak Thai well, preferring the northern (Lao-Thai) dialect. There are individuals who can speak Skaw Karen well, or have a good understanding of it. They speak no other language, and have no written language of their own.

Religion: It is inaccurate, as popular beliefs would have it, that most of the Lawa are now Buddhists. While it is true that most of them might profess to be Buddhists, few of them, aside from their priesthood, place as much emphasis upon their Buddhistic leanings as they do upon a form of animism, which has been the original religion of these people. With the exception of the Buddhist wat at Baw Luang, there are few wats that can be said to be strictly of Lawa patronage. By and large, even the Lawa people of Baw Luang, if they can get over pretenses, will admit to animistic practices and beliefs. These people might more accurately be considered as being Animistic-Buddhist and strictly animists. There are a few hundred at most of Lawa Christians. Those Lawa who live further in the hills are strictly animists.
The animism of the Lawa, (which has varying degrees of adherence according to location and adoption of Thai culture) is essentially a belief in benevolent and malevolent spirits, which dwell in all things. It is necessary to make offerings and sacrifices of pigs, chickens, rice, wine and if available, buffaloes, in order to propitiate the spirits. In addition, they have practices which are performed to honor the notable dead ancestors, whose spirits are thought to return to bless and look after the surviving relatives. They have no images or temples, but believe in shamans and exorcists who can remove bad spirits from various localities, or when they enter human bodies. Spirit cords around the wrists and neck are believed to protect the wearer against malevolent spirits.

Villages: The Lawa have permanent establishments in such areas as Baw Luang, and locations which are closer to the Thai settlements. The more remote areas of plateau settlements may be changed every 10 to 15 years, as the lands around these villages are depleted. Generally, the Lawa depend on the amount of wet rice lands that they have been able to acquire, as a deciding factor for permanence of their villages.

Substantial houses, like those of the Thai people around them, are seen in the more permanent villages. In fact, the entire village appears to be a Thai settlement, with houses built in orderly rows, and narrow lanes between them. There are fences and enclosures around each home with small gardens and some fruit trees. These houses are made on sturdy piles, with wooden floors and walls, and may have tile roofs. The Lawa in more remote areas of the plateau and elsewhere, also build houses upon piles, but use bamboo slat walls and thatch grass or leaf roofing. These homes are not altogether poorly made, and compare with the relatively good houses that the Htin build. However, the villages are disorderly and there is poor sanitation. The locations are usually flat ridges, on elevations over 3000 feet. The Lawa of the plateau at Baw Luang are on an elevation of 3700 feet.

Some of the Lawa villages may have some 15 houses, whereas several of them number over 100 houses in the permanent settlements. Baw Luang is the largest village, with 230 houses, and has the new Chiangmai-Mae Sariang highway passing nearby.

Physical Description: The typical Lawa is rather dark-complexioned (dark-brown), with sharp facial features that do not show Mongoloid traits. They are on the whole a fine-looking race, and somewhat larger in stature than most other hilltribes (the average
man is about 5' 7"). Many contrasts in physical types will be seen in any Lawa establishment. These less typical characteristics have resulted from mixing of their blood with that of the Thai, and more uncommonly, the Karens. Many Lawa have the wavy hair and thicker lips that is a common trait among the Wa. There is a tendency among the men, to have heavier beards and hairy limbs. The men are generally lean and wiry in build, and the women are quite buxom.

The dress of the more assimilated Lawa is identical with that of the Lao-Thai people around them, and only a few of them use their tribal dress today (see accompanying photographs). The unassimilated Lawa women dress in coarse homespuns of plain cotton materials, and use very little decorations or jewelry. The women wear blue or dirty-white blouses, which reach below the waist and have closed fronts and short sleeves. There may be a few embroidered designs on the sleeves and hems, and a few beads might be worn around the neck. The skirts are wrapped around and reach just below the knees, with designs running in horizontal stripes. Leggings are usually worn by the women who live in the more remote villages. Generally, the married women wear the blue tunics, and the unmarried girls a white color, but this is not a fast rule with all the Lawa. Their hair is pulled back, and made into a bun at the back. They never wear turbans, and have very few silver rings and bracelets.

The men are rarely seen in their original homespuns. Today, Lawa men wear clothes like that of the Thai, so that it is difficult to distinguish them from the Thai farmer.

**Economy:** The Lawa on the plateau have been iron smelters and miners until more recent years. Today, some of them continue to be ironsmiths, but none of the Lawa mine their own ore anymore, since iron and steel can easily be bought from the Thai people. Their principal economy, therefore has been agriculture in recent years, either of the swidden type or wet rice cultivation. Their ability to earn cash income is limited, like the Karens, since most of their agricultural production is used for their own consumption. The few Lawa within the larger settlements who have shops and small trading businesses, tend to raise the average income of all Lawa to something over 1000 baht per year per family, otherwise, this average would be very much lower.

There are very few families of Lawa who have moved to areas high enough in elevation to grow opium poppies, but the soil condi-
tions of their area (the right banks of the Mae Chem River) are so poor that very few crops can be produced satisfactorily. These Lawa move frequently, looking for high valleys that might have a few rai of paddy land to be developed.

The more assimilated Lawa keep considerable numbers of pigs, cattle and buffaloes, some of which are sold for cash. They are not vigorous farmers, except where they have arable lands that can be used for wet rice cultivation. Few of the more distantly located Lawa are self-sufficient through their agriculture alone, and must depend upon jungle products to supplement their needs. In such areas, the Lawa still eat the flesh of dogs as well as most wild animals that they might catch or shoot.

**Contact:** There is a wide difference in the degree of contact that the Lawa people have with non-Lawas. The more assimilated may either be the same as the country Thai themselves or have at least very close outside associations. The remote Lawa have as little contact as the Akha in some localities. They deal mostly with the Lao-Thai and Karens who live near them, having little or no contact with other tribes in the general region. In the more assimilated communities, intermarriage with the Lao-Thai is quite common, although even these Lawa are a long way from being absorbed completely by the Thai. Some Lawa men become itinerant workers, like the Kha Mu (next chapter), and wander far from their homes, invariably to return after some time.

**Social Customs:** Assimilated Lawa practice many Thai Buddhist ceremonies on special Buddhist occasions, to keep up with their Thai neighbors. Their own original ceremonies and social activities need more study, since so many have been discontinued or are not practiced regularly. They are not, in any event, a great people for festivities.

The more backward Lawa are people with rather unclean habits and chew betel excessively, but few of them have become addicted to opium. Those living closer to the Thai people chew betel as much as the country Thai do themselves, and drink strong rice liquor on special occasions. There are considerable differences in the attitudes that the different types of Lawa have for outsiders or visitors. On the other hand, the more civilized Lawa have become the same friendly, cordial host that the Thai people are. The more remote members may at times be quite unfriendly, mostly out of ignorance, and are easily misunderstood because of their gruff language and ways. Even these, however, are not an aggressive or pugnacious people, as are their Wa counterparts. Most of them have learned and gained much from the gentle Thai farmers.
Village Government: In the near areas, the Lawa headman has been duly appointed by the local Kamnan or through the Amphur’s office. There are Lawa leaders who are themselves Kamnans and take an active part in the Amphur official activities. The remote Lawa continue to select their own nominal chiefs, usually according to the general will of the people within a given village. There are proportionately few villages with such practices today, since most Lawa circles are at least in touch with the local Kamnan.

They are rather a law-abiding people who obey the Thai district officials, and there are few incidences of crime among themselves or with other tribes. Most of them understand and respect the Thai Government’s laws and tend to place any complaints through proper sub-changwad channels. The uneducated Lawa might deal with their own criminals very drastically. Ostracizing guilty members is a common punishment.

Trends: Considering the long period of time that the Lawa have been in their general area, it must be said that their rate of absorption by the Thai people has been a very gradual process and continues to be such. Some circles, to be sure, have definitely been completely absorbed, such as the former villages near Chiangmai city and near Vieng Pa Pao, Chiangmai Province, but the distinctive physical features of the Lawa will still be seen in such communities. In such a situation, none of the young people are able to speak the Lawa language and few of the older people will use the language among themselves. However, in the Baw Luang and adjacent areas, they have become assimilated mainly in economic aspects, retaining their tribal affiliations and language. Indeed, it is a fact that physically, the Lawa in this area have modified the Thai people around them as much as the Thai have modified them, through the mixing of their bloods. There are villages which consider themselves to be Lao-Thai, but the Lawa characteristics are so strong in them that one is immediately impressed that the village might actually be Lawa instead. The "pure" Lawa, who are racially very different from the Thai peoples, certainly have more dominant genetic characteristics than the Thai people. While economic assimilation will undoubtedly be an eventuality, it will be a very long time before the physical characteristics of the Lawa people are lost completely.

Other than the trend towards greater assimilation with the Thai peoples, the Lawa do not show today any definite trends to move away from their areas. They are becoming more and more permanently established within the plateau region, and at the same time, more closely established with the Thai peoples, their customs and their economic systems.
Skaw Karen
Married Woman

Skaw Karen Girl

Skaw Karen Man

Black Labu Couple
Aka Headman

Aka Man

Aka Man

Lisu Women
THE KHA MU
(KHA-MUK, KAMU)

Affiliation: The Kha Mu in Thailand have come from Laos, mostly from Luang Prabang district. Because of their close linguistic ties with that of the Lawa, there are strong reasons to believe that they may have been a part of the ancient Wa groups (see Lawa) which formerly lived in Thailand. It is probable, although not definitely established, that they had moved into Laos from Thailand in the first place, and have come back into Thailand along an ancient migration route. (This is the author's personal opinion, other students may not agree.) Physical and linguistic similarities are strong between the Kha Mu and the Lawa and Wa tribes. They are thought to be of Mon-Khmer stock, or have Mon-Khmer influences, but this might be as remote as in the cases of the Wa and the Lawa. Wider racial and linguistic affiliations need more study.

Location and Population: There are relatively few Kha Mu in Thailand who remain in villages on the mountains. Many thousands of them have come to Thailand to be absorbed by the Thai peoples. Those Kha Mu who have native villages today are located mostly in northern Nan Province, with a few villages in southeastern Chiangrai Province. There are 30 villages reported, which average about 20 houses per village, some 600 households, and a total population of 3,300 Kha Mu people. Those Kha Mu who have become Thais are scattered all through Thailand, with individuals appearing even in Bangkok.

Language: The Kha Mu language is related to the Lawa and Wa, with many words that are the same, either to one or the other of these two dialects. What constitutes "Mon-Khmer" influence in the several dialects of the Kha Mu is a conjecture that all students of the subject do not agree upon. They have borrowed considerably from the Laotians, using these modified terms as an established part of their everyday speech. The Kha Mu language, on the whole, sounds more like the main Wa dialects than the Lawa tongue, with less final consonants pronounced and abrupt, monosyllabic words rich with rolled "r's". The syntax is again closer to the Wa, and where words actually differ, there are invariably more suggestions of the Wa than the Lawa. For example, the sentence, "Where are you going?" as spoken in these three languages for comparison: (Lawa) "Heau ka nome?" (Wa) "Hu te maw?" (Kha Mu) "Yaw
te mue?”. All three languages use the words such as “dog” (saw), number “one” (te), and number “five” (hpuan) with almost identical pronunciations.

**Religion**: The Kha Mu are animists who have tinges of Buddhism in their practices. Like the Htin (next chapter), they build spirit gates over the approaches to their villages, and believe in good and evil spirits which must be propitiated with offerings of chickens, rice and wine. They may build special houses for these sacrifices and invocations. Their adoption of Buddhist customs is indefinite. There are no wats nor idols, but they may consider various Buddhist charms useful, and often join in the Thai Buddhistic celebrations. A comparatively few of the Kha Mu, who still live in their mountain villages, are real Buddhist, and a few of them have become Christians.

**Villages**: The Kha Mu live on elevations generally over 2500 feet. Their villages are not large, but their houses are substantial buildings made upon slopes and sites which are near to water sources, usually along the foothills. Some of their villages are identical with those of the country Thai farmers, and may be neatly arranged, while others are rather disorderly clusters of houses.

**Physical Description**: The Kha Mu are very much like the Lawa, a dark-skinned people, of similar stature. They are sturdy, well-proportioned people, with sharp, finely-cut facial features, but have less of the wavy-haired characteristics, more common among the Wa and Lawa.

Tribal dress is similar to that of the Lawa. The women have more embroidered designs on their skirts and “sack” blouses and wear heavier earrings and more beads. The men have a distinctly different jacket than the tribal dress of the Lawa. These are long-sleeved, with some embroideries on the hems and fastened to one side at the neck. They do not wear these tribal costumes regularly, but it will be seen more commonly among them than among the Lawa. In other respects, they resemble the Lawa very much, the men usually wearing clothes like the Thai farmers or clothing that has been purchased in the towns.

The Kha Mu are on the whole a rather healthy, robust people, but various sicknesses especially malaria, are common among them. Because of their considerable wanderings, Kha Mu men sometimes contract venereal diseases which are then introduced into their villages. Yaws has been reported among the Kha Mu and a serious problem has developed where this disease has been introduced.
Economy: The Kha Mu are not, by and large, an energetic people or thrifty farmers, but they are hard workers in certain types of heavy labor. Their gardens and farms on the hills are usually small units that do not wholly supply their needs. Many Kha Mu men have moved away as itinerant laborers with logging companies and road gangs, sometimes never to return again to their villages. They keep livestock, but never in numbers enough to earn needed cash. Where the Kha Mu have acquired arable lands for wet rice crops, this becomes their main livelihood and principal source of income. They sell swine and vegetables to local towns in smaller proportions. None of the Kha Mu have been reported to be growing opium in their various settlements, but individuals who have joined other hill-tribes have become opium cultivators. In some areas, the Kha Mu have tracts of wild tea which they pick and ferment to be sold to Thai buyers. Their average income would be about the same as the Lawa, some 1500 baht per year per family. Again, this average is estimated high because of individuals who have small trade businesses and have learned to make more money in non-agricultural practices.

Contact: The Kha Mu of Thailand have attempted to imitate their Thai neighbors and have increasingly closer relationships with them. There is a characteristic wanderlust among the young men, who like to travel and see other places. They will readily leave their villages to work for people of the towns and cities as servants, and for this reason, the Kha Mu are becoming assimilated faster, perhaps than any other hilltribe people. This is not an easy thing for their women, to be sure, and many of them therefore are marrying into other tribes.

All Kha Mu men are fluent in Lao-Thai and conduct their livelihood and businesses mostly with or through the Thai peoples. Some Kha Mu specialize in working with other hilltribes such as the Meo and Yao of Nan Province. Their men are bold, when it comes to making contacts with other people, but they are not the clever businessmen that the Meo and Yao are, and forget easily their responsibilities to their families.

Social Customs: Many of the social activities practiced by the Kha Mu, which were their original practices, have been lost. They have certain festivities which they celebrate such as weddings, funerals and Buddhist holidays. They are not, however, noted for fancy dress or distinctive activities on such occasions. They are not as light-hearted a people as many of the other hilltribes.
The Kha Mu do not themselves have many bad habits. Few of them become addicted to opium, although most of them chew betel nut. Those who have lived on the plains return with stronger drinking habits or have picked up other vices, but at the same time might also have learned the better things of life.

**Village Government:** Most Kha Mu headmen are appointed by the local Thai Kamnan, and are registered with the Amphur's office. Some of these have been selected by their own people in the first place, later to be recognized by the Amphurs. As such, the Kha Mu have no special systems that are not the usual village government practices in Thailand. The village headman is authorized under law to oversee and conduct local administration of his people, and may settle petty disputes himself. All important cases must be reported to the Amphur's office, and this is rather well adhered to. They obey Thai laws, and seldom have serious conflicts among themselves, avoiding litigations and disputes.

**Trends:** There is a definite trend among the Kha Mu to become more and more assimilated with the Thai peoples. As explained above, much of this is due to the tendency of the men to move away as job-seekers in other locations. The men frequently marry outside their tribe, and the women as well but usually to Thais and more uncommonly, to other hilltribe people.

The Kha Mu who have been permanently established in Thailand do not show any desire to emigrate from this country. There are many itinerant workers who annually come to Thailand for work, but this rate has been largely reduced in recent years. Kha Mu on the Laotain side are always eager to move to Thailand and would do so in large numbers if Thai immigration laws were to be relaxed.

Their villages are moved quite frequently, when located in the more distant hills, since much depends upon the available lands for their crops. Nearer the valleys and foothills, they remain longer or tend to become permanent. There are few Kha Mu villages now which do not have some Lao men or women included. Their ethnic identities are rapidly changing, enhanced by their relatively small numbers in Thailand.
A Htin woman

Elderly Htin woman

Htin facial types which show strong "Wa" characteristics

Htin facial types which show strong "Wa" characteristic
THE ITIN AND KHA HAW  
(KHA ITIN. TIN, KATIN: KHA-HAWK. HAW. HO)

Affiliation: The Itin and Kha Haw are treated here together in view of their close similarities. Unless special reference is made to either group, the statements made will apply to both of these sub divisions.

The Itin and Kha Haw differ mainly in language, although these are close dialects. Their original tongues have enough differences so that unless these people use modifications in their speech, they are not mutually intelligible to each other. Their dress and physical features, however, are nearly identical.

These groups are related to the Kha Mu and Lawa, both linguistically and physically. They are, therefore, two sub divisions of the Wa-related tribes and the same racial stock. Statements made in the previous section on the Kha Mu may be regarded as applicable to both of these tribes.

Location: There is but a single village of the Kha Haw in Thailand, located west of Rae, Amphur Rae, Nan Province. The Itin are rather more widespread, but also limited to the northern areas of Nan Province near the Laos border.

Population: The single village of Kha Haw in Thailand has 28 houses in which 196 people live according to the latest information. The Itin have at least 126 villages, an average of 25 houses per village, 6 persons per household and an estimated 18,900 people at the present time in Thailand. Many of these are comparative newcomers to Thailand, but other members of this tribe have lived in Thailand for 40 or more years.

Language: Wa-related languages, with similarities to the Lawa. These tribes are fluent in Lao-Thai, but unable to speak any other languages. They have no written language of their own and are, so far, illiterate.

Religion: An animism similar to that of the Kha Mu, including spirit gates which are built on the approaches to the village from the valleys. A few professed Buddhists are reported among the Itin and Kha Haw. A few Itin have become Christians, and those who have taken up residence with the Thai people have all become Buddhists.
**Villages**: These tribes build substantial houses on piles with bamboo and sometimes wooden walls and floors. The roofs are either thatch or of leaves. The homes are more on the order of the Thai farmers and are generally large and roomy. Some of the villages are on ridgetops, so that water may often be a long way away. The average elevation of these villages is about 3000 feet. There are numerous smaller villages and hamlets scattered about, but most of them are affiliated with a larger main village. Relocation occurs quite often among the smaller villages which are located on higher elevations, but generally these villages remain in one location for about 10 years. Nearer the foothills, their villages tend to remain longer.

There is considerable care and workmanship in the construction of Htin and Kha Haw houses, and likewise, there appears to be more attention to the premises, although they build few fences. In some villages, substantial “guest” houses are made, in which meetings and even school courses are given. These are built somewhat on the order of a Thai country schoolhouse, and gives the visitors the impression that it is the “headquarters” building or has some such official function. They are a hospitable people, although they do not particularly enjoy having visitors, because of their superstitions that outsiders bring in bad spirits.

**Physical Description**: In features they are the same as the Kha Mu previously described. It is difficult to find members of these tribes who still wear their tribal costumes. Only a few of the older people will have a blouse or a skirt to indicate something of their original dress. Most of the young people have adopted Thai dress styles, but the women’s skirts usually show some of their own tribal colors (red, yellow, and black), as well as designs that they have adopted from the Thai women of northern Nan.

Health is generally better among these people than among the Kha Mu, but they have similar problems, especially malaria. Venereal diseases are quite rare, and no yaws have been reported. There are certain dietary deficiencies and worms are common among the children.

The Htin and Kha Haw are a stoical, slow-moving people, with sad faces and quiet dispositions. That they are capable of hard work is evidenced by their good houses and by the care which they take with their livestock. Despite this, they are not the thrifty farmers like the neighboring Thai farmers.
Economy: The two tribes are swidden farmers whose main crop is rice. Some of the Htin are located high enough for the opium poppy and grow this as a cash crop. Others depend upon tea that is picked from the wild tracts, and sold as fermented tea to Thai buyers, or upon the swine which they do not use for their own needs or for sacrificial purposes. Nearer to the Thai villages, some vegetables are grown and sold at the markets. In all, they are unable to average more than 1000 baht per family per year.

In some ways, the Htin and Kha Haw are self-sufficient, as far as their own food requirements are concerned, since they place the main emphasis on their yearly rice crop. However, they are an undernourished people, who need larger units of farm lands and a greater variety of crops. There are certainly, contrasting differences among the Htin of the various areas, some being much better off than others. They do not have very active intravillage trade and have not yet learned to deal profitably with the Thai people.

Contact: The Htin and Kha Haw are rather reserved people, who have not yet mixed a great deal with the Thai peoples. This contact has improved over what it was a decade ago, and much of it is owed to energetic valley people who go up into the mountains to attempt various trade contacts. They are not reluctant, but slow to grasp the importance of inter-tribal relationships. There is a general impression that they are waiting for something to happen, without knowing just what to expect. Among other things, they await the education that their children are only now beginning to obtain in some locations.

Main contacts are the Thai traders and buyers who come to their villages, and during their occasional trips to the towns of the valleys. There is little contact with other tribes for purposes of inter-village trade, although they are not unfriendly to each other when they meet. Inter-marriage is rare, and is limited to an occasional individuals who leaves the Htin or Kha Haw society altogether to marry into Thai communities.

Social Customs: While social customs and many other aspects need further study for these changing peoples, it might be said that there are few differences, if any, from that of Kha Mu communities. Their health is somewhat better than the Kha Mu, because they live on higher elevations as a rule, and because of their cleaner villages and social habits. Their main vice seems to be that of chewing betel, which is very damaging to their teeth. There are few opium
addicts, even among older men, and drinking is done moderately even on special occasions.

**Village Government**: There remain those Htin villages which still adhere to their own systems of village government and selection of leadership, but many of them, like the Kha Mu, have recognized headmen who are in close touch with the local Kamnan: Generally, they are reported as a peaceful, gentle people, with few serious crimes. Their fear of the Phi Tong Luang (see next chapter) has caused them to shoot some of these unfortunate jungle people, on occasions in the past. Other than that; there have been few bad individuals to have come from these quiet people. There is room for further study and familiarization with the life and ways of these people.

**Trends**: There are indications that the Htin and Kha Haw are being assimilated by the Thai people, but the rate of this trend is much slower than that of the Kha Mu. The Htin and Kha Haw do not readily desert their societies to become itinerant workers, nor have they the distinct wanderlust that the Kha Mu have. They have, therefore, held their communities together in stronger bonds, and tend mainly to adopt more and more of the Thai customs, rather than to mix their blood with them.

The better established villages, with more arable lands, tend to become permanent. Some indications of permanent agricultural practices are appearing, such as orchards and paddy fields. It is doubtful that any of these people have any intentions to return to Laos, and many of their people in Laos would be quick to migrate into Thailand, if this became possible for them. The Htin continue to trickle into Thailand in small numbers, despite border regulations, to add to their large numbers already in Nan Province. There are certainly strong desires on their part, to move into areas of central Nan Province, and especially because they would like to make new homes in the lower regions. To date there are few definite movements talking place, which are outside of the general area in which they have settled. However, their lands are being exhausted, and they are too densely populated within a comparatively small area.
Kha Mu boy of Nan Province
THE YUMBRI OR PHI TONG LUANG
(KHA TONG LUANG, KHON PA)

A review of the hilltribes of Northern Thailand would not be complete without some mention of the rare and elusive Phi Tong Luang. Ethnologists who have made special expeditions (Bernatzik, 1937; Weaver and Goodman, 1954-1956) and contacted a few roving bands of these jungle folk, have many interesting observations on them. While the author makes no claims to have seen the Phi Tong Luang, he has, at times, been in their general habitats and seen their footprints. In addition, first-hand accounts given him by Lahu and Meo tribesmen who had been in touch with the Phi Tong Luang, has given the author some understanding of these strictly forest people. That there are still roving bands of Phi Tong Luang in Northern Thailand, is supported by various hillmen who have had contacts with them, as recently as early 1960.

Affiliation: There are strong possibilities that more than one ethnic subdivision of Phi Tong Luang are actually in existence, and that they may represent retrogressed peoples from several different tribes, rather than a single, very primitive race. Those contacted by Bernatzik, and later by Weaver in Nan Province, spoke what these writers described as a Mon-Khmer language, calling themselves "Yumbri." The Lahu of the Doi Vieng Pha region, Amphur Prao, Chiangmai Province, have reported that the Phi Tong Luang found in their area appeared to be "Wa" types who spoke a mixed language among themselves that sounded like Meo, Kha Mu and Lao-Thai, and that their name for themselves was "Plo". (Note: The Wa call themselves "Prao", which has a close similarity to the term "Plo"). The Phi Tong Luang, reported by Lahu hunters in the Kengtung area of Burma, have been described as being Wa, and speaking a Wa dialect. But more confusing are the reports by Meo and Lahu from the Doi Chang area of Chiangrai Province, who state that the "Phi Tong Luang" in their region spoke a distinctly Lao dialect among themselves. It was among this clan that a Lahu informant had lived for three months as a fugitive, so that he became well-acquainted with them by the time he left. The possibility that the Phi Tong Luang may have more varied ethnic affiliations, together with their elusive characteristics and diminishing numbers, makes it difficult to establish any definite facts about their racial relationships.
Location: In Northern Thailand, there are three areas in which the Phi Tong Luang are still reported to be found in roving bands. Northern Nan, Doi Vieng Pha (north of Muang Prao, Chiangmai Province), and in the Doi Chang mountains west of Chiangrai. They may also roam between Laos and western Chiangrai Province.

Population: The various roving bands would total some 50 Phi Tong Luang at least and possibly as many as 150 people, according to the Lahu who had lived with a clan which had over 100 people in it.

Language: Probably a Wa-related dialect with a mixture of other tribal dialects, or there are dialects of separate relations and influences. The Phi Tong Luang speak to the Meo and Lahu people in broken Lao-Thai and seem to have members who understand this language quite well. They are certainly nonliterate.

Religion: Bernatzik stated that the Phi Tong Luang are pure animists who make spirit offerings and have no shamans, idols or amulets. Weaver is supported by the Lahu observers, who claim that the Phi Tong Luang have a system of worshipping their long spears. The Lahu also claim that these people have shamans and amulets and observe certain phases of the moon as auspicious days upon which to make offerings to the spirits, and to dance around their long (12 feet or more) spears.

Villages: The Phi Tong Luang make no villages, and choose the deepest forest glades in which to make their temporary “lean to” pole-and-leaf shelters, leaving these when the leaves turn yellow (hence the name, “ Spirits of the Yellow Leaf”). The Lahu man who lived with them claimed, however, that the Phi Tong Luang had established a large camp, with long shelters for the entire three-months period that he remained with them. He stated that such camps were made by the Phi Tong Luang only once a year, at which time they met for a general “convention”, later to disperse again in small bands. He added that some of the bands were made up of women and children alone, and that he was told, these groups would not see each other until the following year’s rendezvous.

Physical Description: Various descriptions have been given. Some state that the Phi Tong Luang look much like the average northern Thai people, and others say that they have the darker, more “Wa-like” features. They wear very little clothing, usually loin clothes made from old rags that have been begged or traded from other mountain people. There are reports that they do not wear any
clothing at all when they are by themselves, placing these loin clothes on only to visit a village. The Lahu who stayed with them reports, however, that those Phi Tong Luang had clothing, and that they had not put them on simply because he was in their midst.

Weaver found that the band he contacted were suffering very badly from yaws. Other reports indicate that they are not unhealthy, being a strong wiry-built people on the whole. The Lahu man reported that he was so impressed with their physical fitness and attractiveness that he was tempted to become one of the Phi Tong Luang by marrying a woman in their tribe.

**Economy:** The Phi Tong Luang do not worry about a cash income because they do not know the meaning of money. They are hunters and foragers, who live entirely off the jungles. Bernatzik noted that the Phi Tong Luang had long spears, which he said they were unable to throw, but used as a stabbing weapon. The Lahu claim that they are expert in throwing the spear both from overhead and under-hand positions, so that they are able to use their spears very effectively in killing wild game. For big game, they surround the animal and try to get it to charge them, in order that the spear may be used in a braced position against the ground upon which the charging animal impales itself. In such fashion, they have been known to kill the great Saladang (Bos gaurus), bears and even tiger. The Lahu, who are themselves great hunters, have much respect for the hunting prowess of the Phi Tong Luang. They are especially adept at hunting the wild pigs, covering themselves with the faces of the wild pig, and stalking right into their midst without the pigs knowing about it. Lahu who have hunted with the Phi Tong Luang have many tales and exciting accounts of the fantastic abilities these people have in the jungles.

The Meo, Yao, Lisu, Akha and Lahu all claim that at one time or another, their villages have been visited by the Phi Tong Luang, who have brought in beeswax and finely-woven rattan mats, to trade for old knives and clothing. They never stay long in the villages and disappear again into the jungles. There are reports that other jungle products are sometimes brought in for barter and that salt and rice are asked for by the Phi Tong Luang. However, there are so few occasions on which salt has been given these people, one wonders where and how they fill this requirement.

**Contact:** The Phi Tong Luang have trusted the Meo and the Lahu for bartering, but have avoided other tribes because they have on
occasions been misunderstood and shot at by them. Many of the hill-tribes continue to believe that they are actually "phi" or ghosts and spirits, who might harm the village. They are seldom seen in the jungle, disappearing quickly if strange persons come into the area in which they may be. They have been seen on occasions to dart across trails by Lahu hunters while out on hunting trips. A few of the Lahu had befriended them to the extent that they joined together for their hunts. The Phi Tong Luang are able to live near other hill-tribes without their presence being known.

**Social Customs**: Information is understandably lacking in this respect. There are indications that the Phi Tong Luang have strange and primitive customs regarding their mating. It is said that they will return together after long separations for this purpose and join together in one main encampment such as the one that the Lahu man lived in. Others claim that families of Phi Tong Luang are found roaming the jungles together in search of food. Their main concern is survival and most of their activities surround this vital problem in their lives. They are, perhaps, the most primitive-living human beings to be found today.

**Village Government**: There appears to be little, if any, organization in this respect. Leaders of bands are probably the older men and most decisions are made simply through mutual consent. There is no knowledge of or allegiance to any government.

**Trends**: It can only be known that wandering bands of Phi Tong Luang continue to roam various jungled regions, presenting no social, political or economic significance. They are a diminishing people, being killed by wild animals and accidents, and perhaps being wiped out, in cases, by the yaws and other diseases. They are significant mainly as an interesting part of ethnological study, and perhaps it will be too late to save any of these shy jungle people even for such purposes. Few will ever know of the tragedies and difficulties that must surround these simple human beings, who will perhaps roam the forests until their diminishing numbers are finally lost entirely.
Skaw Karen men

Skaw Karen woman with her child

Typical Skaw Karen village scene

Karen children
Skaw Karen couple inside their house

Skaw Karen maiden

Skaw Karen maiden

Skaw Karen woman
The Skaw Karen
(Yang Skaw, Karieng)

Affiliation: The Skaw (or S'gaw) Karens are at present the largest group of the four Karen divisions, as well as being the most populous hilltribe group represented in Thailand. Others in the main "Karen" race are the P'wo, the B'ghwe (or Ka-ya), and the Taung-thu, found in northern Thailand today and described in the following chapters. They have all come from larger numbers living in Burma, with many more sub-divisions represented in that country.

While racial and linguistic affiliations are not definitely established for these people, it is generally accepted that they are a branch of the Tibeto-Burmese stock, and that their origin has been from regions north of Burma and Thailand. There are evidences of Mon-Khmer influences, more specifically Mon, in their linguistic affiliations, and physically, they represent wide differences. There are Karens with strong mongoloid features, ranging to those who have mixed bloods of Wa and even negrito influences. The Skaw Karen might be considered as a "purer" Karen group showing more Tibeto-Burmese characteristics, physically, than the B'ghwe or Taungthu (more "Wa").

Traditions would place the Karens, during the period before the Mon-Khmers, along the Mae Kang river valleys, in what is now the Burma-Laos frontier. (Note: The Lahu traditions say that the Karens were their "brothers" at one time, perhaps in areas of southern China.) From these regions, the Karens moved west, then southward into Burma. Most of Thailand's Karens came through the eastern borders of Burma, both in ancient times and more recently. They may have come to Thailand even before the Thai, and just after the Mon-Khmers.

Location: The Skaw Karen are widely distributed throughout the western half of northern Thailand, reaching Chiangrai Province in the north and remaining west of the Mae Wang river.

Population: A conservative estimate indicates out of the total Karen population of 71,500 people for northern Thailand, 45,000 are Skaw Karen. This is the largest number in any one sub-division of the hill people. It is estimated that there are 280 Skaw Karen villages (at least) and some 7,000 houses, which average 6.5 persons per household.
Language: Skaw Karen, as one of the major dialects of Karen language, has not been definitely determined as to its linguistic affiliations. It is generally agreed that this and other Karen languages are of the Tibeto-Burman stock, and that peculiar features of the language might be considered as a result of Mon influences. It has six tonal pitches and is different from the Burmese in syntax. Few Karens in Thailand are literate in any language.

Most of the men and boys speak Lao-Thai well, but few of the women can speak any language other than Skaw Karen. In the Mae Sariang and Mae Hongson area, the men speak more Shan than they do Lao-Thai. Newcomers from Burma are all fluent in Burmese and a few of them are literate in Burmese. There are variations of the Skaw-Karen dialect according to locations or sub-tribes.

Religion: Most of the Skaw Karen are animists, including the large numbers of their people who profess to be Buddhists. There are reported to be about 3,000 Christian Karens in Thailand. There are groups and individuals who are Buddhists.

The Animism of all of the Karen groups found in Thailand is similar. They believe that spirits reside in rocks, trees, water, mountains, valleys and in innumerable inanimate objects. There are variations in the spirit offerings and sacrifices that must be made to propitiate them, and practices which are concerned with funerals and weddings. Their religious leaders can be older women as well as men who have special function in the practices. These functions might be concerned with the "souls" alone, or such specialities as officiating at weddings and funerals. The dead are usually buried but cremation is practiced for those who die of sickness. They also believe in guardian good spirits of the house, of the village, and of the fields, and "keep" them with special offerings at different spots. When a child is born, it is thought to receive a soul only after the "soul" has been properly invited into the child, and special appeals to the good spirits are made in order to insure that the child gets a good "soul". This soul is then "secured" by strings which are tied on the child's wrists. Skaw Karens in the remote areas are often so superstitious that almost every activity in life is interpreted as having some direct connection with the spirits. A tiger which has killed a buffalo may not be hunted, or even mentioned, because the act may have been interpreted as the will of the spirits.

Villages: Skaw Karen villages are of two types, those in the valleys being more substantial and permanent, and those in the hills being
quickly assembled bamboo structures. The typical village site is usually on sloping foot-hills near streams or rivers. More strictly hill-dwelling Karens prefer flat ridgetops, on which to build clusters of smaller houses on piles with bamboo walls and floors. Roofing is usually thatch or leaf in all Karen villages. The houses of the valleys are larger, built on solid piles, and sometimes have wooden floors and walls, although more commonly of bamboo. There are smaller villages and hamlets, but on the average, there are about 25 houses in a Skaw Karen village. There is a wide difference in their villages as far as sanitation and cleanliness is concerned, some of the "wilder" ones being appallingly messy and poorly kept, and others being quite neat and clean. The average location of Skaw Karen villages might be on an average of under 2000 feet in elevation, since the majority of them have moved to lower regions.

Physical Description: There are "sub-tribal" differences among the Skaw Karens, one of which is the variations that will be seen in their tribal dress. By and large they can be distinguished from the P'wo Karens easily enough, but local opinions will give a visitor the impression that there are many distinct tribes within the one group alone, with as many different names that have been coined to suit the slight differences. The average Thai farmer will usually be mistaken in his identification of the Karen tribes, calling the Skaw Karen "Red" (Daeng) "Kue-Lue", and even "White" or "Yang Khao".

The Skaw women have very different costumes from the P'wo, and this serves as the simplest way in which the two groups might be differentiated by appearances alone. (See P'wo Karen, Physical Description for comparison). By custom, Karen women wear two types of dress, depending upon their marital status. The young Skaw girl must wait until she is married before she can put on the prettier dress of the married woman, and this is a very important reason for any Skaw girl to be married. The unmarried girl's dress is a long, white slip-over tunic of coarse homespun cotton, with very little embroidery. The married woman wears an attractive short-sleeved dark blue blouse closed in front, and with the lower portion decorated with striking red and white beads. Her skirt is red, cross-banded with fine designs, and a red turban adds even more color to her attire.

The men wear short-sleeved tunics of red color with tassels together with loose pants, usually dark blue or black. They will wear turbans of various colors. The men do not wear their tribal clothes
as much as the women do, having adopted the clothes of the local Thai and Shan people to a greater degree.

The Skaw Karen are a handsome people, of light-brown complexion and sturdy, stocky builds. The maids are very buxom, since they are usually not wedded until well in their twenties. The men are husky and muscular. There is considerable sickness in any Karen village, especially malaria, but they appear, on the whole, to be a healthy and cheerful people. Some of the men become addicted to opium and they are strong drinkers of rice whiskey. Men, women and older children all smoke tobacco pipes constantly, and chew betel nut.

Economy: On the whole, the Skaw Karen, together with the other Karen tribes, have very humble incomes. An average of 1000 baht per year per family is probably a high estimate. They are not by any means self-sufficient, and depend much upon the Thai farmers around them for food. A proportionately few of the Skaw Karens live on elevations high enough to grow opium poppies. Their main work is concerned with producing as much rice as they have land to work. Most of them keep small gardens and some livestock, which are mostly used for home consumption, if not for spirit sacrifices. Some of these are: fish (when they live near rivers) vegetables, chickens, eggs, some pigs and cattle, bark and other jungle products, dried meat of wild game, bamboo poles, tobacco, ropes, etc. The women in some villages sell cloth and embroidery which they weave and make themselves. In some areas, the Skaw Karen have elephants and buffaloes, which become a main source of income for them. In the more remote areas, they may have no income at all, and concentrate on what crops they can produce, obtaining the rest of their food requirements from the jungles.

Taken as a whole, the Karen is not a thrifty farmer, as compared to the Thai farmer, nor is he especially energetic in his pursuance of an agricultural existence. There are, of course, differences in this respect among Skaw Karens of separate areas.

Contact: The majority of Skaw Karen live much to, themselves and do not venture out to make contacts with other tribes and races. They are able to associate with the Lao-Thai people around them and do so as the needs arise. Poorer Karens will go to the hilltribes for paddy, when prices in the low-lands are too high for them. More prosperous Karens have longstanding business with teak companies, contracting work with them for the use of their elephants or working
as mahouts. Still others are principally fishermen, who are in closer association with Thai fishermen and river people. Location has the main say in whether or not the Skaw Karens will contact and work with other racial groups. There is very little intermarriage, even between the various Karen tribes, but there is a problem with the Karens in the greater female to male population ratio. Their women generally become spinsters and remain with the tribe, but a few of their girls marry Thai men.

Social Customs: The Skaw Karen and P'wo Karen have many similar social customs at which times there is much merry-making and dressing up. A wedding or a funeral is always an important function, and grand feasts, with much rice whiskey drinking, go along with these events.

The Skaw Karen do not have any real dances, but they have a kind of a game which takes the part of dancing. The young people gather around in a circle, with two participants in the middle, who have long bamboo sticks which are clacked together to a rhythm. The participants try to jump through the two sticks as they are brought down to the ground with the ends together, a stunt which becomes progressively more difficult as the speed of the rhythm increases. They also have a sort of antiphonal chanting in which the young men and the young women take turns in responses.

Courting of Skaw Karen is done mainly through the go-between system, and marriage results after proper permission has been exchanged between the couples' parents. There are strict rules and customs, which the young people must adhere to carefully, before and during the wedding. If any of these details are neglected, or violated, they believe that serious consequences might result from the displeased spirits. It is understandable, therefore that the Karens are a moral people on the whole. In the smaller, poorer villages, where there might be a surplus of eligible young girls, the morals might be somewhat lowered, with the older people closing their eyes to loose conduct among their young people, and hoping that their daughters will become wedded somehow, rather than face spinsterhood.

The Karens are a people who believe in bathing frequently when their village is located close to ample water. The women and girls enjoy catching fish along streams and will spend much time at this if other duties permit. The men are avid hunters and enjoy the chase in the same spirit that Lahu men do. They are also expert in
catching wild animals and birds with snares and decoys. Turtles and lizards rank among the most relished wild meats.

**Village Government:** With the exception of the more remote and smaller Skaw Karen villages, most village leadership has been appointed by the local Thai Kamnans or Amphurs. The Skaw Karen are a peaceful people, who have not had frequent conflicts among themselves or with other tribes. They try to settle petty crimes themselves, and since most of these cases will be interpreted as having some spirit connections, the religious leader is usually the one to pass judgements and impose fines. More serious cases which come to the attention of the local police or Amphur officials, are brought to the district offices and dealt with through the regular processes of Thai law. There may be assistant headmen, and second and third headmen, in larger villages which might be divided into several quarters. Despite this established sub-structure in the district-to-village government system, there are few district offices that have accurate records on population and other statistics. Part of this is due to the reluctance of many Karen headmen to report every birth or death to the Amphur's office. In remote villages, the village is ruled by the religious leader or leaders, with a nominal "chief" who is concerned in matters of leadership not involving a religious interpretation.

**Trends:** The Skaw Karen have been exposed to conditions that should be most inducive, and to their benefit, to become more assimilated with the Thai people around them. But this has not been the trend by any means. They remain in tight bonds and clans, without significant intermarriage or apparent desire to become Thais. Some of the Skaw Karens who have been isolated for long periods, and are now completely surrounded by Thai farmers, have still hung on tenaciously to their ethnic identities, and refuse to be absorbed by the Thai people. There are, perhaps, as many cases of Karen men who have married Thai or hilltribe women, as there are Karen women who marry Thai men. There are examples of Thai women, who have become Karens in many of the larger Skaw villages, demonstrating a reverse assimilation.
THE P'WO KAREN
(Kahieng. Yang P'wo)

Affiliation: The P'wo Karen (also spelled Pho and Po, and pronounced ‘Hp'ghwoa’) have very similar, if not the same origin and wider ethnic affiliations, as the Skaw Karen (See Skaw Karen).

While their dialect has many similarities to that of the Skaw, they are not intelligible to each other. Their tribal dress is also considerably different, especially that of the women.

Location: The main concentration of P'wo Karen are to be found along the Mae Pa Phai valley, between the Mae Ping river and Baw Luang, Chiangmai Province. Other circles are located around Mae Sariang, mostly to the west and southwest and extending southward along the Thai-Burma border. There are several circles of villages in Chiangrai Province. East of the Mae Ping river, several circles of P'wo are found in the Muang Li area, and in Changwat Lamphun.

Population: There are 24,500 P'wo Karens in Thailand. Some 150 villages, which average 25 houses per village, having about 3800 houses, with 6.5 persons per house.

Language: A branch of Tibeto-Burman, with Mon-Khmer (specifically Mon) influences, closely related to the Skaw Karen dialect. Statements concerning the Skaw Karen language also applies to the P'wo Karen language (see Skaw Karen) and their other linguistic abilities are the same as the Skaw Karen.

Religion: (See Skaw Karen) The same as for the Skaw Karen.

Villages: The P'wo Karen settle in communities which are more or less within the same general area, and are surrounded by either the Thai, or they adjoin Skaw Karen areas. They are located on the same elevations as the Skaw Karen, being more along rivers and stream valleys. There are few P'wo Karen villages on elevations above 2000 feet. Their villages are almost identical with the average Skaw Karen village, with many of them having adopted Thai styles in houses of more permanent villages.

Physical Description: Physical features are the same as the Skaw Karen, so that on this basis, these two tribes could not be differentiated one from the other. Their tribal dress is quite different.

Married P'wo women wear similar blouses, although longer than that of the Skaw women. These are predominately of red color
with embroidery in diamond-shaped patterns on the upper portion of the blouse. The skirts are of darker colors, black or dark blue. Unlike the Skaw, the P'wo women place more emphasis on the unmarried girls' dress. A young P'wo girl's dress is a complexity of fancy embroideries and ornamental jewelry. Her hair is fixed into a bun on top of her head with large silver hairpins arranged in a fan-like position and protruding outwards. A white cloth band is placed around the forehead. She wears the long slip-over tunic which reaches the ankles but with much more embroidery and tassels on her dress than the Skaw girls. The hems of the sleeves, the portions across the breasts, and the base of the tunics have heavy embroidered patterns. The most striking detail is the numerous wrist and arm bracelets worn for gala occasions. These may fill the entire length of their arms. Silver neck rings may also be worn, together with many beads which hang down in front to the waist. Although these long tunics do not compliment their fine, lithe figures, P'wo girls can take much more pride in the distinctive elegance that is permitted them.

The men do not often put on their tribal clothes. When they do, it is usually limited to the short tunic, similar in design to that of the married women but less fancy. They more commonly wear the same clothes as the Thai farmers. Turbans seem to be optional, but the men tend to hold to the striking old style of keeping their hair long, pulling it down over to one side and into a knot. The younger men like to wear beads around their necks for fancy occasions.

**Economy:** P'wo Karen have the same type of economy as the Skaw Karen, and do not rate higher in terms of ability to earn an income. (See Skaw Karen.)

**Contact; Social Customs; Village Government:** The same as for Skaw Karen. Any peculiarities or differences in social customs need further study.

**Trends:** The P'wo Karen are as much established within their areas as are the Skaw Karen, and likewise, do not show indications of becoming assimilated by the Thai people. If anything, they tend to be more surrounded by the Thai and the Skaw, yet they are slow to be absorbed by either of them. Intermarriage occurs rarely, in approximately the same ratio of P'wo men marrying Thai women or P'wo women marrying Thai men. Relocation does not seem to be a problem among the P'wo Karen. Their main concern is to keep
what land they have and try to obtain more arable lands to adjoin this. They can be considered as having, perhaps, more of an establishment in the lower regions than the other Karen groups, and it is their desire to live in the valleys rather than to move into the mountains. The number of new Karens immigrating into Thailand each year is difficult to determine. There is, undoubtedly, a continuous trend in this respect, and few, if any, are returning to Burma. While most Karens would understandably sympathize with the political difficulties that their people are having in Burma, it is also difficult to determine to what extent their actual loyalties extend. The majority of Thailand's Karens do not appear to have much interest in the political picture, since their homes and villages are more important to them than anything else.
THE B'GHWE KAREN
KA YA, BWG, BGHAI, YANG DAENG)

Affiliation: The B'ghwe Karens call themselves "Ka Ya", and hail from the upper reaches of the Nam Pawn river, in the Loikaw region of Burma. They have migrated, in small numbers, from this area into the western border lands of Mae Hongsorn Province. The term "B'ghwe" is a name used by other Karen groups for these people. The Thai call them "Yang Daeng", (also used for Po or Skaw Karens).

Their earlier origins are not definitely known, but their history is thought to be similar with that of the main Karen divisions. They have received, somewhere in their ethnogeny, a strong admixture of Wa blood, which has given them the Wa type physical features, and a tribal dress which resembles the Wa more than the Karen. They might be considered as being closer to the Taungthu and Palaung than to the other Karen divisions. Linguistically they are related, but well-separated from the Skaw and P'wo Karens. Some writers have placed the B'ghwe as a division of the Wa, and perhaps their conjectures are not wrong. These people could just as well have been Was who became Karens. This influence is strongly apparent, whatever the ethnogeny of these people might have been.

Location: The B'ghwe Karens are a small group, (20 villages) who live only along the border area in western Mae Hongsorn Province, from just south of Mae Hongsorn town to near Mae La Luang, further south along the Burma border.

Population: There are about 1,300 B'ghwe Karen in Thailand, located in 20 villages, some 220 houses, and having 6.0 persons per house.

Religion: The B'ghwe are all animists without exception. Their practices are similar to the Skaw Karen animists, but less involved and ritualistic. They sacrifice pigs, chickens, and if they can obtain them, cattle to the spirits. Offerings of rice liquor and eggs are made to "feed" the good spirits at spirit houses which are made at the base of big trees, thought to have spirits residing in them. They do not have the same "soul" concepts as the Skaw and the P'wo Karens, and
make little ado about introducing or "securing" the soul, although they believe that they have souls which might flee them for various reasons, in which case there is nothing that can be done about it. The person is believed to have lost his soul if he becomes insane.

**Language**: The B'ghwe Karen dialect is related to the Skaw dialect more than to the Wa, as might be expected because of their physical Wa-like appearance. These languages are not mutually intelligible, although they sound somewhat alike. Their linguistic affiliations with other languages are not clearly established. They are nonliterate. The men speak Shan well and use this language instead of Lao-Thai in dealing with other people around them. A few of them can speak Burmese. None of the women are bilingual.

**Villages**: The 20 known villages of B’ghwe Karen are located over 3000 feet in elevation. Typical sites are on gentle slopes near streams. Their houses are on piles, with bamboo floors and walls, and long, low thatch roofs. They are smaller than the Skaw Karen houses and situated closer together. They are also more disorganized, and the sanitation is very poor.

**Physical Description**: The B’ghwe are dark-skinned (dark brown) people, with coarser features than other Karens. They are smaller in stature, but sturdy and stocky on the whole. They are rather unclean in their appearance, wearing dirty clothes and not bathing very often.

The women wear a short, knee-length wrap-around homespun skirt of dirty white or black, with very little embroidery. They do not have a blouse, as such, but wear a strip of cloth over one shoulder and tied at the waist with a sash. Over this is worn a cloak, fastened by its ends at the throat, and reaching the hips. Their turbans are a loose cloth which is simply draped over the head in a haphazard fashion. Numerous lacquered bamboo rings are worn around the ankles and above the calves, and large beads are worn around the neck. They like to wear large earrings which have fancy attachments on them, and this is usually all the silver that a B’ghwe woman or younger girl will wear.

The men dress most commonly as Shan men, but have homespun jackets and loose pants which are their regular tribal dress.
Economy: The B’ghwe Karen have very humble incomes, perhaps 500 Baht is more than the average family would earn in a year. Some of them have no cash income at all, but others may have elephants or some cattle and buffaloes. They would not be self-sufficient if they did not know how to make use of jungle foods, and possibly some 50 percent of their year’s food supply must come from the jungles.

They raise swine, a small proportion of which is sold for cash, and sell some peppers to the local Thai farmers and villages. None of them are reported to be growing opium poppies. Their fields are small forest clearings from which they produce about half a year’s supply of rice and corn. Some vegetables, melons, yams and millets are also grown. Their principle jungle staple consists of wild yams, supplemented with various jungle herbs and vegetables, and wild game. They are good hunters and trappers, quickly depleting an area of its wild game, so that less desirable wild animals are sought for food. Some of the B’ghwe have been reported as being fond of dog meat, and all of them are especially fond of cats and monkeys for food.

Contact: The B’ghwe are a timid people who do not freely mix with other tribes, even the Karens. They deal mostly with Shans, who have always been gentle and friendly to them, and have learned to trust the Lao-Thai farmers in the Mae Hongson valley. They despise the Burmese, who they claim, have always been rude and cruel to them. It is doubtful that there have been any intermarriage between the B’ghwe and other peoples.

Social Customs: There are customs which the B’ghwe have adopted from other Karen groups and from the Shans in addition to their own, but these aspects need more study.

Village Government: There is definitely a lack of communication between the local Amphur and Kannan officials with these people. They are therefore left more or less to their own village government systems. While information is lacking on this subject, there are reports that the B’ghwe follow a system somewhat like that of the country Shans, without having the village government structure...
that the Shans have. Their leaders are apparently selected by the general will of the people, but might be called a "Paw Mong" (Father of the area) or some such Shan title. This is a common practice among other hill tribes of Burma.

**Trends:** The B'ghwe are not exactly newcomers to Thailand, since they have groups that came to Thailand many years ago, later to return to Burma. The present B'ghwe have been located in Mae Hong Sorn Province for about 30 years, with only a fraction of their numbers having come from Burma since 1950. They do not appear to be moving away from their general area towards any other region, remaining at their villages for 5 to 10 years before moving to a new site nearby. It is true that their lands are becoming exhausted and that sooner or later, the B'ghwe must seek new areas further away from their present location. There is no indication that they will be absorbed by the valley people for a long time to come, since they remain in tight little clans and avoid outside contacts as much as possible.
THE TAUNGTHU
(TAUNG-SU)

Brief mention will be made here on the Taungthu, a subdivision of Karens. That they are to be found at all in Thailand is a surprise, this fact having been brought to the author’s attention just as he was completing this review on hilltribes of Northern Thailand. There has been no opportunity to study this tribe more closely, so that their socio-economic particulars are lacking. In addition, it would be inaccurate to report the Taungthu of Thailand as being the same as those groups living in and around Taunggyi, Burma, which the author knew well. The five villages of Taungthu found in Mae Hongson Province, appear to have linguistic and social differences, and are apparently an isolated branch of a larger Taungthu division living in Burma.

The Taungthu (Burmese name for them meaning “Mountain People”) have been classified variously as being a branch of the P’wo Karen or as being related to the Padaung and Yinhaw group. They are sometimes called “White Karens” in Burma, but are called “Black Karens” by the Skaw Karens in Thailand. The latter would seem more appropriate, although this would then confuse them with another group of Karens in Burma popularly known as “Black Karen” by the Shans. Their women dress entirely in black. The name “Taung-su” is a Shan variation of the Burmese term.

There are about 600 Taungthu living in the 5 villages located within the western most projection of Mae Hongson Province. Their villages are located in the mountains on elevations of 3000 feet or more. They have been in Thailand for more than ten years, moving their villages frequently in search of better swidden lands. Their culture does not appear to be as close to that of the Shans as the Taungthu found in the Taunggyi area of Burma, although their dress is reported to be identical. They speak Shan and Burmese quite well, but few of them understand Skaw or P’wo Karen.
The Haw village at Pha Luang, Fang district, Chiangmai.

Haw plough share

A typical Haw house
**THE HAW**

(YUNNANISE)

There are only a few communities of Haw who have settled in the mountains of northern Chiangmai and Chiangrai Provinces. It is questionable that they will remain long, so that only brief mention is made on these people.

The most important Haw establishment is found on Doi Pha Luang (elevation 6000 ft.), Amphur Fang, Chiangmai Province. They had settled in 1951 and demonstrated a type of mountain living which has never before been seen among Thailand's hilltribes. Their example is important, even should they not remain, in terms of what might be shown the other hilltribes in future. They had brought plough shares from Yunnan and use these to advantage in their agricultural practices, using oxen to pull them. In addition, they have shown the importance of buckwheat as a staple and as livestock feed. Their vigor in animal husbandry has also been a source of great admiration by the Lahu and Lisu tribesmen living around them. It is to be expected that their economy would be more progressive and advanced than the other hilltribes, since they had gained their experience in China prior to their arrival in Thailand. In addition, they are shrewd businessmen, who take profitable advantage of small trade and any business venture that is presented them. At most, there are some 650 Haw tribesmen actually settled in Thailand.

While such villages as the Doi Pha Luang establishment appear to be permanent, with fruit orchards, crop rotation and manuring, etc., the political future of these Haw tribesmen is very uncertain. They are desirous of becoming Thai citizens, yet owe a degree of loyalty to the Kuomintang guerrillas who continue to have an indefinite future. (Note: Newspaper reports at this writing indicate that more Yunnanese (Haw) refugees have just arrived in Mae Sai, Chiangrai, fleeing Burmese military action against them.)
TABLE 1
Northern Thailand’s Hilltribes Population, an Estimation on the Basis of Known Villages and Average Houses and Persons Per House.

*Date of Estimation: November 1960*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Avr. Houses/villages</th>
<th>Total Houses</th>
<th>Avr. Persons/house</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Blue Meo</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3300</td>
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<td>375</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Lahu Shehle</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Lahu Shi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kha Htin</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3150</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>18,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Kha Mu</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Kha Haw</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. La Haw</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Phi Tong Luang</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals** 1146 — 29675 — 217,000*

*Grand total rounded to the nearest five hundred
TABLE 2  
Location of Hilltribes by Provinces and the Stability of Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Meo</td>
<td>Nan, Chiengrai, Chiengmai, Tak, Prae, (Petchaboon and Pitsanuloke)</td>
<td>10-15 years in localities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Meo</td>
<td>Nan, Chiengrai, Tak, Prae</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gua-m'ha Meo</td>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skaw Karen</td>
<td>Mae Hongson, Chiengmai, Tak, Lampoon, Lampang, Chiengrai</td>
<td>10 years or more and increasingly more stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P'two Karen</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B'ghwe Karen</td>
<td>Western Mae Hongson</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taungthu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akha</td>
<td>Chiengrai</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yao</td>
<td>Chiengrai, Nan and Chiengmai</td>
<td>10-15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisu</td>
<td>Chiengmai, Mae Hongson, Chiengrai and Tak</td>
<td>6-8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haw</td>
<td>Chiengmai and Chiengrai</td>
<td>Unstable, newcomers since 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Nyi</td>
<td>Chiengmai, Mae Hongson, Chiengrai and Tak</td>
<td>5-8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Na</td>
<td>Chiengmai, Chiengrai</td>
<td>7-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Shehleh</td>
<td>Chiengmai, Mae Hongson and Tak</td>
<td>5-8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Shi</td>
<td>Chiengrai</td>
<td>Newcomers (1959-60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kha Htin</td>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>10 years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kha Haw</td>
<td>Nan</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kha Mu</td>
<td>Nan, Chiengrai</td>
<td>6-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawa</td>
<td>Mae Hongson, Chiengmai</td>
<td>10 15 years (remote areas), permanent in other areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phi Tong Luang (Yumbri)</td>
<td>Nan, Chiengrai (?)</td>
<td>A few weeks only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TABLE 3**

Percentage of Yearly Population Increase Over Deaths and Causes of Deaths in Lahu Nyi and Lahu Nn Villages Between November 1959 and November 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village Studied</th>
<th>Number and Causes(^*) of Deaths</th>
<th>Total per village</th>
<th>Current Population</th>
<th>Number of Births</th>
<th>Percent Population Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pu-muen</td>
<td>a 2 b 2 c 4 d 3 e 3 f 4 g 3 h 1 i 3 j 1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whey-ha</td>
<td>a 2 b 1 c 2 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 2 j 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ta-ka</td>
<td>a 1 b 1 c 3 d 1 e 2 f 2 g 3 h 1 i 3 j 1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whey-tat**</td>
<td>a 1 b 1 c 1 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 1 j 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen-kham-lue</td>
<td>a 4 b 3 c 9 d 11 e 4 f 11 g 2 h 3 i 6 j 4</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-pun</td>
<td>a 1 b 2 c 3 d 3 e 3 f 3 g 3 h 3 i 2 j 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ka</td>
<td>a 1 b 3 c 1 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 1 j 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ta</td>
<td>a 1 b 2 c 1 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 1 j 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ya-mi</td>
<td>a 2 b 1 c 2 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 1 j 2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca-law</td>
<td>a 3 b 2 c 1 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 1 j 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca-bi</td>
<td>a 2 b 2 c 1 d 1 e 1 f 1 g 1 h 1 i 1 j 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>a 11 b 11 c 24 d 27 e 18 f 19 g 13 h 10 i 15 j 14</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>2,745</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>4.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^*\)Causes:  
- a. Stillborn infants  
- b. Women in childbirth  
- c. Malaria, all ages  
- d. Dysentery, all ages  
- e. Pneumonia, all ages  
- f. Accidents  
- g. From wild animals  
- h. From snakebites  
- i. Killed in feuds  
- j. From old age

**The only Christian village represented.**
### TABLE 4
Average Persons Per House in Lisu Villages

(October, 1960)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages studied (21)</th>
<th>No. of houses</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Persons per house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Na-lao, A. Chiengdao</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawng-kang-tet, ,,</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nam Ka, A. Chiengdao</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoa Hkawng, ,,</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nam Hkawng, ,,</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doi Cu Hong, ,,</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoa Mae Tet, Mae Taeng</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doi Sam Muen, ,,</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae Sa-lak, ,,</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa Pen (1), ,,</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa Pen (2), ,,</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa Pen (3), ,,</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pa Tawng, A. Mae Chem</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maw Pi, ,,</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Mo, ,,</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Htam Ngawp, A. Fang</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hpa Luang, ,,</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vieng Hpa, ,,</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Kan, A. Mae Chan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peo Pang Mong, ,,</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Lawng, A. Mae Suay</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>788</strong></td>
<td><strong>9454</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.0 Avr.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 5
Average Persons Per House in Labu Nyi and Labu Na Villages

*November 1969*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village studied (11)</th>
<th>Number of Houses</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Per House</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pu-muen, Amphur Fang</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whey-ha, Amphur Fang</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ta-ka, Amphur Fang</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whey-tat, Amphur Mae Taeng</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sen-kham-lue, Amphur Pai</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-pun, Amphur Mae Suay</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ka, Amphur Mae Suay</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae-ta, Amphur Prao</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae ya-mi, Amphur Prao</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa-law, Amphur Mae Chan</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sa-bi, Amphur Mae Chan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>350</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,745</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.9 Avr.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average houses per village*.......................... 32  
*Average persons per village*......................... 250  
*Average persons per house*......................... 7.9

(Note: These figures are not necessarily the national averages)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Percent sold</th>
<th>Percent consumed</th>
<th>Labor days required</th>
<th>Percent of work year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>10–</td>
<td>90+</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn, millets</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>40–</td>
<td>18+</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium*</td>
<td>85+</td>
<td>15–</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes, yams</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea (miang) **</td>
<td>90+</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>17+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>10-50</td>
<td>50-90</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>10+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>50–</td>
<td>10+</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>15+</td>
<td>5+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushrooms</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild yams</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild vegetables</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild meats</td>
<td>5+</td>
<td>95–</td>
<td>10-60</td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barks, herbs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>2+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchids</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>1–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beeswax</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>1–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey, larvæ</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>1–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Applies only to opium growing tribes, i.e. Meo, Lisu, Yao, etc.

** Applies only to tribes working wild tea tracts, i.e. Htin, Kha Mu.

(Plus signs = "or more"; Minus signs = "or less")
### TABLE 7
Average Yearly Income Per Hilltribes Family and Sources of Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Baht Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meo, Northern</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Swine, potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meo, Southern</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>Peppers, vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meo, Nan Province</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Swine, potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen, Skaw</td>
<td>Swine, poultry</td>
<td>Peppers, vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen, P'wo</td>
<td>Swine, peppers</td>
<td>Tobacco, vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen, B'ghwe</td>
<td>Swine, peppers</td>
<td>Jungle products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taungthu</td>
<td>Swine</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akha</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Jungle, products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yao</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Swine, cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisu</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Swine, cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Shi:Shehleh</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Swine, peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Nyi:Na</td>
<td>Opium</td>
<td>Swine, peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Htin/Kha Haw</td>
<td>Swine, Tea</td>
<td>Opium, vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kha Mu/Lawa</td>
<td>Rice, Swine</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yumbri</td>
<td>Jungle products</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haw</td>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>Swine, cattle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 8
The Ethno-Linguistic Affiliations and Usage of Other Languages
by the Northern Thailand Hilltribes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tribe</th>
<th>Ethnic Stock</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Other Dialects &amp; Percent Speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Meo</td>
<td>Of Chinese extraction wider affiliation not clearly known.</td>
<td>One of the Meo-Yao Pateng group.</td>
<td>Yunnanese 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lao-Thai 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thai 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Meo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gua-m'ba Meo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yao</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skaw Karen</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman (Mon influence)</td>
<td>Lao-Thai 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shan, Burmese 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P'wo Karen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B'ghwe Karen</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman (Wa influence)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shan 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burmese 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taungthu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akha</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman (Lahu-Lisu-related)</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman (Lolo influence)</td>
<td>Lahu 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yunnanese 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lao-Thai 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisu</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman (Akha-Lahu rel.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yunnanese 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lahu, Lao-Thai 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Na/Nyi</td>
<td>Tibeto-Burman (Akha-Lisu rel.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shan, Lao-Thai 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yunnanese 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Shehleb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shan, Lao-Thai 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahu Shi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yunnanese 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Htin, Kha Haw</td>
<td>Wa related, of Southern origin.</td>
<td>Separate Wa-group language</td>
<td>Lao-Thai 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawa, Kha Mu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lao-Thai 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Karen 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yambri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lao-Thai 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haw</td>
<td>Yunnan Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin type</td>
<td>Shan, Lao-Thai 10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Linguistic abilities vary according to location and permanence of tribal settlements; the "percent speaking" is very general.